LITERARY SOUNDSCAPES OF THE AMERICAN WEST

by

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STATEMENT OF DISSERTATION APPROVAL

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ABSTRACT

Influenced by the continued growth of the interdisciplinary field of sound studies, my dissertation examines sounds and soundscapes in several prose works of Western American literature. *Literary Soundscapes of the American West* examines literary sounds—the collective, but varied, representations of sound, silence, and voice in literature—that represent intimate, affective, and always-changing relationships between people and places in the contemporary American West. I argue that Sherman Alexie, Cormac McCarthy, Terry Tempest Williams, and Charles Bowden use literary sounds to encourage—and potentially activate—what I call an audile mode of attention, which underscores sound as fundamental to people's understanding of place as well as their relationship to space generally. My analysis examines literary sounds that resonate in representations of specific Western locales: a Northwestern metropolis, the Southwestern redrock desert, and the U.S.-Mexican borderlands. Literary sounds do not operate identically in each of my primary texts. In fiction, such as Alexie's *Indian Killer* and McCarthy's *The Crossing,* representations of sound occupy an understated and subordinate position in the text. In contrast to these fictional works, Williams' *Red* and Bowden's *Murder City* demand that readers attend to sound because it represents local knowledge about pressing ethical concerns.

In my analysis of contemporary Western literature, I employ critical regionalism,

sound studies, and affect theory and argue that Alexie, McCarthy, Williams, and Bowden produce literary sounds that represent the tensions between various spatial scales (the personal, the local, the regional, and the global) in twentieth- and twenty-first century Western places. By combining the overlapping concerns of these three critical paradigms with my interest in representations of place in contemporary Western American literature, my dissertation evaluates the productive potential of excess in a selected body of literature. The particular excess that I consider here is made up of a relatively immaterial and transient form, sound and, to be more specific, sounds produced in literature. To say that sound, in everyday life or in literature, constitutes excess is not to suggest that it is not necessary to or always already resonant in our interpretations of and experiences with place and space. Rather, I argue that sounds produce excess by activating untapped potential and calling upon readers and listeners to identify in place those contingent truths and realities that escape our notice when we view place as a closed and contained form.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: SOUND, SILENCE, AND LITERATURE OF SOUNDFUL PLACE

> *None of the arts is entirely mute, many are unusually soundful despite their apparent silence…*
>
> ~Douglas Kahn, *Noise Water Meat*[1]

> *He hurried on across the Los Muertos ranch, almost running, even putting his hands over his ears till he was out of hearing distance of that all but human distress. Not until he was beyond earshot did he pause, looking back, listening. The night had shut down again. For a moment the silence was profound, unbroken.*
>
> ~Frank Norris, *The Octopus*[2]

> *Silence does not eliminate differences. Rather, it makes it possible not only for differences to emerge, but also for a universal identification in difference to take place. Silence is the site on which alterity and universality converge.*
>
> *~María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo,* "Reading a Silence"[3]

Walking through the hills dividing the Quien Sabe and the Los Muertos ranches in California's San Joaquin Valley, Presley, an aspiring poet and the central character in Frank Norris' turn-of-the-century novel *The Octopus: A Story of California* (1901), observes a herd of sheep on the valley floor. From above, he sees the herd as "a compact,

solid, slowly moving mass, huge without form, like a thick-pressed growth of mushrooms, spreading out in all directions over the earth" (28). The mass is "without form," but Presley nonetheless perceives it as "compact" and "solid." His consolidation of a dispersed herd is an aesthetic gesture, Presley's attempt to conceptualize "hundreds upon hundreds upon hundreds of grey, rounded backs" as a unified, singular form (28). After consolidating the herd by sight, he listens to its "vague murmur," which is "confused, inarticulate, like the sound of very distant surf" (28).[4] Although Presley groups the individual voices of sheep into a single "murmur," the "vague," "confused," and "inarticulate" sound is clearly anything but "solid" (28). More importantly, he lacks the skill or craftsmanship, as a listener and poet, to articulate—that is, to distinguish and particularize—the surf-like, flow of sound.

At first glance, the passage seems to set up a dichotomy between sight and sound, wherein the latter troubles Presley's anthropomorphic aesthetic, his intent to meld disparate nonhuman parts into a form—a pastoral landscape—familiar to the westward-moving Euro-American settlers of the nineteenth century.[5] Though Presley listens closely, sound contributes little to his conscious efforts to formalize the landscape. To his ears, the vocalizations of sheep create sound without form rather than communicating meaning. Moreover, the murmur confuses his sense of distance from the sheep, as it seems "like the sound of very distant surf" (28). Sound is not only less informative than sight, but it also disorients Presley, interfering with his attempt to locate himself in relation to the landscape and the forms that occupy it. The "murmur" of the herd should be neither more nor less "vague," "confused," or "inarticulate" to Presley's ears than the formless mass of sheep bodies is to his eyes, yet Norris' descriptions suggest that Presley

attributes intelligibility to sight that he does not afford sound (28).

Troubling this apparent dichotomy, however, Norris employs similes in his descriptions of both sight and sound that indicate the persistence of Presley's struggle to organize the scene. The herd spreads before his eyes "like a thick-pressed growth of mushrooms," this simile implying the unpredictable, rhizomatic movement and expansion of fungus (the herd) that appears "thick-pressed," consolidated, on the surface of the ground (28). The possibility of microscopic and indecipherable movement troubles Presley's interpretation of the herd as "compact" and "solid," and he concedes that the mass is "without form" even as he assigns it formal distinction (28). The murmur is similarly formless, but Presley suspects that he cannot systematize the fluid sounding. The sound of the herd, "like the sound of very distant surf," is repetitious, a stream of vocalizations that he can neither dissect nor contain, prompting him to interpret sound as not only formless but also "inarticulate" (28).

With its attention to that which escapes articulation, this passage from the opening chapter of *The Octopus* bears significantly on some of the central tensions present in works of American literature that represent place on the local and regional scales. To articulate place as local or regional, most writers (Norris certainly among them) attempt to draw relations or establish connections between heterogeneous elements in place, constructing form through creative labor. Through such efforts, some writers contain the differences and still the dynamic and unpredictable interactions that occur within lived-in places. Indeed, they appear to do so for Presley, who desires the bodies and vocalizations of sheep to produce a cohesive form and communicate a singular message. Yet, the passage's account of inarticulate sheep sounding highlights the rupture to formal

singularity that transpires when a writer, Presley or Norris, represents a dynamic place, already overflowing with meaning prior to human mediation. This sounding, perceived by Presley as distant, introduces a stream of data (here acoustic information) unaccounted for by vision that unsettles "his West," a local and regional place he plans to articulate in verse (44).

In recent years, western studies scholars have adopted critical regionalism to examine, as Neil Campbell suggests, "westness as a multifaceted, evolving discursive formation constantly spilling out, reforming, splitting, and connecting" (22).[6] According to Campbell, the practice of critical regionalism in western studies requires readers to attend closely to the "outside" because it provides "a strategy for opening up and scrutinizing established ideologies and languages, canonical practices and texts, resilient and official mythologies" (14). In my dissertation, the collective, but varied, representations of sound, silence, and voice that I call literary sounds "open up" and connect representations of the West as local or regional to that which is outside writers', or their characters', more rooted visions of place (14). The western writers I examine in this dissertation represent sounds that flow into local and regional places from the outside as well as sounds that spill over from the inside. Using literary sounds, these writers examine, and entice their readers to examine, the mobile and transformative relationships between people and place in several distinctive western places: Sherman Alexie's Seattle (an urban West), Cormac McCarthy's U.S.-Mexican borderlands (a borderlands West), Terry Tempest Williams' redrock desert (an erotic natural West), and Charles Bowden's Juárez (a violent, urban borderlands West).[7] Transformative relationships with and in place begin on the most local scale, the body and consciousness of a single person (or

animal), where experience with sound engenders the acceleration or stagnation of affective bonds between people and place. As Mary Pat Brady explains in *Extinct Lands, Temporal Geographies*,

> Interactions with space are not merely schematic but also highly affective; places are felt and experienced, and the processes producing space therefore also shape feelings and experiences. (8)

Literary Soundscapes of the American West listens to and interprets literary sounds from texts set in the contemporary West, and produced nearly a century after Norris' novel in order to argue that sound is not, as Presley perceives, "inarticulate" (Norris 28). When we listen closely, literary sounds communicate much about the tensions between various spatial scales in western writers' representations of place. Most writers, particularly those who I address in the pages that follow, are adept at interrogating the often-ambiguous contents of sound, its potential at turns to situate people in place and disorient them. I dispute the commonly held belief that, as sound theorists Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter put it, "the language for describing sounds is weak and inadequate" (6). Their claim is based on the argument that "modern culture" is "fundamentally oriented toward visual communications" and, as a consequence, "has little appreciation for the emotional importance of hearing, and thus attaches little value to the art of auditory spatial awareness" (6). As my reading of the opening chapter of *The Octopus* indicates, vision performs a fundamental and primary, albeit somewhat imperialistic, role in Presley's attempt to conceptualize place, while sound disturbs his efforts. The primacy of vision does not, however, necessitate the ineffectuality of sound, or the inadequacy of language to describe it.[8]

In recent decades, in the interdisciplinary field of sound studies, scholars have

developed an increasingly proficient and artful vocabulary to discuss the ways people and animals use sound to sense and navigate space. Equally important for my purposes, writers have long used sound to imagine, create, and represent relationships between people and places. The lack of "appreciation" for sound and its important role in spatial awareness, when it exists, is not a consequence of "weak and inadequate" language but rather the potential of sound to interrupt or disturb particular visions of place (Blesser and Salter 6). Here, my understanding of sound's unsettling potential contrasts with Roland Barthes' argument that "listening is that preliminary attention which permits intercepting whatever might disturb the territorial system; it is a mode of defense against surprise" (247). Sound often surprises listeners, rather than providing them with "a mode of defense" against it (247). By producing surprise, sound provokes revision—a process that requires people to amend continuously their visions of and relationships with places.

Re-Visioning a Global West by Listening

Western writers encounter a number of "established ideologies," "canonical practices," and "resilient and official mythologies" as they attempt to revise their own and their readers' visions of the twentieth- and twenty-first-century American West (Campbell 14). Central among them is the grid, a geographical tool and strategy used to organize the West, its variegated places, and its diverse cultures and peoples. Dating the "power of the grid as a tool of mapping empire" in the western United States to President Jefferson's 1785 Land Ordinance, Neil Campbell explains that the grid system of mapping helped to generate assumptions "about possession built around the visual control gridding appears to supply" (10). The grid, he argues, operates in policy, cultural

production, and our imagination as "a metaphor for contained, boundaried ways of thinking" (9).[9] In the American West, the influence of the grid is particularly resonant, for "one cannot think of the West as rural or urban space without visualizing the powerful checkerboard symmetries of the meshlike grid as it arrests and orders space" (9). Campbell's assessment of the grid as an inherently visual and implicitly imperialistic "way of thinking" bears out in Presley's literary endeavors at the start of *The Octopus* (9). Presley, who is trying to write an epic poem, the "great poem of the West," acknowledges that the project's success depends on his ability "to get back to that first clear-eyed view of things," a transcendental vision free of abstractions (Norris 38). Seemingly unaware of his naïve romanticism, not to mention the colonialist or imperialist dimensions of such a vision, he understands sight as productive of clear-eyed, innocent neutrality.

To achieve a "clear-eyed view" and write his epic poem, Presley thinks that he must watch "his West…unrolling there before the eye of his mind" (37). On his walks through the landscape, he looks to gain an elevated vantage point from which to observe "the open, heat-scourged round of desert; the mesa, like a vast altar, shimmering purple in the royal sunset; the still, gigantic mountains, heaving into the sky from out of the cañons" (37). There, "before the eye of his mind," an "open" and "still" landscape unfolds, and Presley tries to achieve poetic mastery of the scene: "As from a pinnacle, Presley…dominated the entire country" (42). In moments of silence, as when "a faint breath of wind out of the south passed slowly over the levels of the baked and empty earth, accentuating the silence, marking off the stillness," Presley is confident in his vision of the West (44). His perception of the "faint breath of wind" differs markedly from his earlier encounter with the murmuring herd, as here sound is dialectically related

to silence. Silence creates space wherein, like the wind, Presley is capable of "accentuating" and "marking off" an empty and still earth. In such tranquil moments, he feels "a sudden uplift, a sense of exhilaration, of physical exultation," and "as from a point high above the world, he [seems] to dominate a universe, a whole order of things" (44).

The poet's domination of the country is quickly interrupted, however, by sounds that disturb his pastoral vision of a late nineteenth-century California landscape. Just as he is grasping "his song in all its entity," there is a sudden "interruption" (46). Nearby, on the border of the Los Muertos ranch, a locomotive approaches and "[shoots] by in a sudden crash of confused thunder; filling the night with a terrific clamour of its iron hoof" (46). Again, Norris uses the word "confused" to describe Presley's perception of sound; sound is confusing because it disturbs his vision of the landscape and troubles the grid he has been constructing (46). It causes the earth, a moment before serenely "still," to "quiver" (46). As the "thunder" of the train recedes, another sound replaces it:

> …the moment the noise of the engine lapsed, Presley—about to start forward again—was conscious of a confusion of lamentable sounds that rose into the night from out of the engine's wake. Prolonged cries of agony, sobbing wails of infinite pain, heart-rending, pitiful. (47)

A band of sheep, separate from the "mass" Presley observed earlier, has been struck by the Pacific & Southwestern Railroad's locomotive (28). In the immediate aftermath of the collision, Presley listens to the "confusion of lamentable sounds" (47). These sounds have a remarkable effect on Presley's movements. He is "about to start forward again" when the "cries of agony" and "sobbing wails of infinite pain" freeze his steps (47). The sounds of agony and pain communicate a "pathos" that is, according to the narrator, "beyond expression" (47). Unable to endure the cries and wails of the sheep, Presley

flees the scene.

Norris' representation of Presley's flight highlights the commanding effect that sounds have on his relationship to place on the local scale:

> He hurried on across the Los Muertos ranch, almost running, even putting his hands over his ears till he was out of hearing distance of that all but human distress. Not until he was beyond earshot did he pause, looking back, listening. The night had shut down again. For a moment the silence was profound, unbroken. (48)

Presley regains control of his motions and emotions only after he is "out of hearing distance" and "beyond earshot," at which point, he looks back and listens (48). This moment bears close scrutiny, for Presley's listening follows his attempt to outrun sound, begging the question: is he really listening? In truth, when he encounters sounds that intrude on his peaceful walk, Presley tries to avoid listening, "even putting his hands over his ears," as if he is only willing to listen when sound supports a particular kind of vision of the landscape (48). Presley finds silence "profound" because it upholds "the feeling of absolute peace and quiet and security and untroubled happiness and content" (48) that he hopes to experience in the California countryside, a feeling he imagines will inspire "his West, his thundering progression of hexameters" (44). As the novel continues, forced repeatedly to encounter sounds that disturb quiet meditation in otherwise bucolic settings, Presley learns that he cannot maintain a single "clear-eyed view" of the West, that any moment of profound silence will shortly be shattered by sounds that demonstrate turbulent and unpredictable motion in the landscape (38). The literary sounds of *The Octopus*—the sheep's murmuring and wailing, a gentle inland breeze that accentuates silence, and the thunder of the railroad—set Norris' West in motion, highlighting interactions between various bodies that here result in conflict rather than producing a

coherent form, the "West" of Presley's imagination (44). This mobile or, as Neil Campbell would call it, rhizomatic West is "contested" and "unfinished" (Campbell 43), constituted as much from outside the region—by, for instance, the P & SW railroad or the global trade in wheat—as from inside it.

In separate readings of *The Octopus*, Russ Castronovo and Hsuan Hsu attend to Norris' representation of a mobile West in relation to the process of globalization at the turn-of-the-century. Norris' conceptualization of globalization, in their view, shapes his "aesthetic formalism" in a novel, where "a single, perfect form" (the globe) ultimately overwrites local and regional places and the experiences that take place there (Castronovo 159). Ultimately, according to Castronovo and Hsu, Norris' global aesthetic hinges on connections—between wheat fields in Tulare County and markets in the Far East—that the railroad and shipping fleets help to establish. Assessing the author's relegation of the local and regional to the global, Hsu observes,

> Norris inserts regionalist aesthetics into an emotionally charged epic of globalization and dramatizes how imperialism and international commerce contribute to the ongoing transformations of a particular wheat-growing region. The novel thus bears out Russ Castronovo's suggestion that Norris's sense of aesthetic form originates not in local communities, but in an expansive and potentially fascist globalism. (44)

Castronovo suggests that globalization "has always structured aesthetics," specifically "formalism's ideal of unity and balance" (Castronovo 178). This "criteria of unity" in "traditional aesthetics," evident in Presley's vision of a pastoral California landscape, supplies "the logic of expanding markets" in Norris' novel, where in the global market for wheat "excess meets up with scarcity, famine solves the problem of overproduction, and West folds into East in a series of transnational flows" (178). According to this credible reading of *The Octopus*, Norris represents local, regional, and hemispheric

places as structured by globalization and the transnational "flows" of capital (178). In this relationship, "the ranch" becomes "merely part of an enormous whole, a unit in the vast agglomeration of wheat land, the whole world round, feeling the effects of causes thousands of miles distant—a drought on the prairies of Dakota, a rain on the plains of India, a frost on the Russian steppes, a hot wind on the llanos of the Argentine" (Norris 51). This representation of the Los Muertos ranch hints at the vulnerability of local places within a top-down system of globalization. Yet, the passages from Chapter 1 of the novel, scarcely attended to by Castronovo and Hsu, confirm, supplement, and trouble their interpretation of Norris' fascist, global aesthetic. These earlier passages highlight Presley's desire for formal congruency alongside his suspicion that he cannot systematically contain all forms. Sound performs a central function in Norris' representation of place as at once uncomfortably personal, local, regional, and global. Like the "distant surf," sound flows out and spills over, intensifying Presley's experience in a heterogeneous local (the ranchlands of San Joaquin Valley) and regional (California) place that he cannot satisfactorily organize or conceptualize (28). As a result of this intensification, Presley never discovers the western utopia that he imagines in the first chapter of the novel.

In *Unsettling the Literary West: Authenticity and Authorship*, Nathaniel Lewis observes that "both western literature and its criticism" frequently "take on a utopian character, not only because they sometimes present the West as a 'garden' or Eden but also because of a teleological sense of arrived-at-understanding" (245). To contest this "utopian character" and the "teleological sense of arrived-at-understanding" that it produces, Lewis identifies numerous disturbing and unsettling moments in western

literature that suggest "no common locus, no True West" exists (246). As a consequence, readers of western literature should not "arrive at" a singular understanding or vision of the region; rather, they should encounter a West, or many Wests, in a state of continuous flux (246). According to Lewis, readers of western literature should "resist pedagogical tradition, authorial direction, and cultural instruction" (243) in order to avoid treating it as "a strangely static body, without energy or purpose or mystery" (2). Scholars, he suggests, should "start listening to literature" (243). I take Lewis' recommendation to "start listening" quite literally here, finding in the literary sounds and soundscapes of the American West representations of places that show writers and their characters adapting their understanding of the West according to the sounds, silences, and voices they hear (243). If we arrive at a static understanding of the region, or any place for that matter, then we are no longer listening. Sounds repeatedly introduce new information that should supplement and inform what we know, or thought we knew, about places in the American West and our relationships with them.

Place, Space, and Critical Regionalism that Listens

In his concise *Place: A Short Introduction*, social and cultural geographer Timothy Creswell provides a useful overview of the ways geographers and philosophers have thought of the terms place and space over the course of the last several decades. Although space is inseparable from place, particularly in our attempts to define the terms, in general it "has been seen" by various geographers "in distinction to place as a realm without meaning—as a 'fact of life' which, like time, produces the basic coordinates of human life" (10). Spaces, Creswell suggests, are often conceived in terms of geometry;

they have "areas and volumes" (8).[10] In contrast, places are "spaces which people have made meaningful" and become "attached to in one way or another" (7). In this sense, to understand places, we must articulate their meaning and examine, particularize, and connect the various energies, encounters, and interactions that "attach" us to them (7). Creswell surveys the evolution of the term place across competing paradigms in the field of geography, beginning with regional geography in the 1960s, which commonly represented place by "reveling in the particular" and "drawing boundaries" (16). He concludes his survey of the field by examining the critical human/cultural geography of the 1990s and 2000s, by which scholars like David Harvey, Doreen Massey, and Edward Soja conceive of place as "an event marked by openness and change rather than boundedness and permanence" (40). Often explicit in these latter analyses of place are the global flows of capital and "the process of uneven [geographical] development across the globe" (26). Over the course of the last couple of decades, the field of western studies has dramatically shifted its attention toward the work of critical human/cultural geographers so as to address, Krista Comer explains, the "complex ongoing interpretive questions" about place-making "that get ever more layered in an era of globalization and the transnational travel of culture" ("Assessing the Postwestern" 4).[11] As Comer suggests in "Everyday Regionalisms in Contemporary Critical Practice," this redirected focus has led a number of western scholars to adopt "expansive, flexible interdisciplinary methodologies" (30). Arguably, nowhere is the field's recent interdisciplinary flexibility more apparent than in its adoption of critical regionalism, a theoretical paradigm born in architectural studies.[12]

In *The Rhizomatic West: Representing the American West in a Transnational,*

Global Media Age, Neil Campbell reviews "the genealogy of critical regionalism as an architectural concept" en route to his argument that an expanded critical regionalism in western studies "enables us to comprehend the West as a complex process…continually being constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed in multiple spaces" (44). The "reframed region/regionalism" he extends through this paradigm "is an international, living mix of voices, uncontained, problematic, contradictory—a series of border discourses that articulates the West as it works inward and outward" (44). His "redefinition of regionalism" refuses "to get to the border (of region or nation) and turn back, to simply close up on itself from the wider world beyond" (44). A number of key terms in Campbell's account of western critical regionalism speak directly to Presley's experience with place, space made meaningful through articulation. A local and regional place is a "living mix of voices"—of sheep, of wind, of locomotives, of Presley himself—that is "uncontained, problematic, contradictory" despite the protagonist's best efforts to contain place through boundaried ways of thinking (44). When Presley turns tail and runs from the "sobbing wails" of injured sheep (Norris 47), he effectively reaches a conceptual "border," his predetermined notion of the region, and "turns back," seeking the comfort of his romantic vision (Campbell 44).

Norris' novel demonstrates the ways of thinking that Campbell's redefinition of region, via critical regionalism, is up against—a conservative tendency to view place (on any spatial scale) as a firmly bounded structure or construct that keeps out what western writer Charles Bowden calls "the dreaded outside" (29).[13] Though Norris accommodates a singular conception of place, region, and globe unified through the wheat trade, his representations of sounds rupture the borders he and his protagonist attempt to construct.

In like manner, literary sounds perform a central role in rupturing spatial borders and boundaries in the contemporary western texts I examine.

Literary Sounds and Soundscapes Defined

Literary sounds are a set of narrative practices that writers use to represent sound as well as to provoke audible performance of written text by readers. These practices potentially make reading literature a soundful experience in which, as J. Edward Chamberlain suggests of the stories of George Laforme, "words [are] not about an event; they [are] the event" (115).[14] Writers' representations of sounds take the form of elaborate, networked descriptions rather than merely relying on rhetorical devices like onomatopoeia. Onomatopoeia is a device by which writers attempt to imitate sounds by drawing readers' attention to their phonic structure. But descriptions of sound, a general class of literary sounds, do not necessarily serve mimetic purposes. Literary sounds may often begin when writers employ onomatopoeia, but descriptions of sounds subsequently situate specific sounds within broader spatial contexts (beyond the sounds' sources) and emphasize their contact with other bodies within a soundscape.

In Thoreau's *Walden*, for example, the "Hoo hoo hoo, hoorer hoo" of a hooting owl is a "sound suited to swamps and twilight woods which no day illustrates, suggesting a vast and undeveloped nature which men have not recognized" (118-19). Attentive to the soundscape in which this particular sound is located, Thoreau follows his use of onomatopoeia with a description that extends outward from the owl to a place "where the single spruce stands hung with usnea lichens, and small hawks circulate above, and the chickadee lisps amid the evergreens, and the partridge and rabbit skulk beneath" (119).

Seeming to interact with, if not react to, the owl, a "different race of creatures awakes to express the meaning of Nature there" (119). A literary sound, in this example, begins with a discrete sound from a singular source, but as with the other examples we will encounter over the course of this dissertation, it provokes interactions that are ultimately more significant to the narrative than the sound itself. A literary sound is never ultimately discrete; instead, it is but one among many sounds that combine and interact in a literary soundscape, a narrative assemblage of sonic events.

This term, soundscape, has been defined in multiple ways since R. Murray Schafer popularized it in the 1970s. In his landmark work *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (1977), Schafer argues that a "soundscape consists of events *heard* not objects *seen*" (8). For Schafer, a soundscape is an assemblage of "events heard," similar to a musical composition, a relatively organized mass in which some sounds fit and others do not (8). Due in part to his environmentalist ethos, he was quite preoccupied with distinguishing between healthy, or hi-fi, soundscapes and polluted, or lo-fi, soundscapes, which he often associated with twentieth-century urban spaces. Thus, soundscapes have somewhat rigid boundaries for Schafer. A number of scholars have since taken Schafer to task for his definition and application of the term. Jean-Francois Augoyard and Henry Torgue, for instance, note that his "application of the criteria of clarity and precision discredits a number of urban situations impregnated with blurred and hazy (not to say uproarious) sound environments" (7). Because of the rigidity of Schafer's distinctions, Augoyard and Torgue question "whether, other than for the fields of aesthetic analysis, creation, and conservation, the use of the term soundscape remains useful and pertinent" (7).

Concerned principally with "aesthetic analysis," my work keeps the term in play, while also attempting to loosen the boundaries of soundscapes so that they refer more broadly to sound environments where individual literary sounds are continuously changing and interacting with others, in the process producing mobile literary soundscapes (7). Literary soundscapes show that the whole, in fact, is never complete, but is instead repeatedly ruptured as individual parts interact.

By introducing the idea of acoustic communities, Barry Truax, whose research is influenced by Schafer, provides a noteworthy update to the discourse on soundscapes:

> The acoustic community may be defined as any soundscape in which acoustic information plays a pervasive role in the lives of the inhabitants (no matter how the commonality of such people is understood). Therefore, the boundary of the community is arbitrary and may be as small as a room of people, a home or building, or as large as an urban community, a broadcast area, or any other system of electroacoustic communication. In short, it is any system within which acoustic information is exchanged. (66)

In my analysis, literary soundscapes are "systems" with "arbitrary" boundaries (66). Acoustic information is "exchanged" over the course of a text; literary sounds interact with each other to produce a system, community, or soundscape that is not always coherent (66). In part, soundscapes lack coherence due to the blurriness of their edges, borders, and boundaries. Phenomenologically, sound has an interesting relationship to boundaries. In *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening?*, Blesser and Salter suggest that "for hearing, volume or area remains primary, and boundaries are secondary," while "for vision, the opposite is true" (21).[15] For example, whereas a viewer can see the physical border between the United States and Mexico in El Paso-Juárez and San Diego-Tijuana, no corresponding auditory boundary exists between the nations. Sounds flow across the voluminous boundaries separating the U.S. and Mexico in ways that reflect the everyday,

historical movement of bodies across the border. Standing at the wall that divides the nations, listeners can hear sounds from both sides of the border, and these sounds are virtually indistinguishable: traffic moving north-south-east-west and coughing exhaust fumes, people speaking English and Spanish, birds squawking, dogs barking. In contrast, to look at the other side (el otro lado) is to distinguish there from here (este lado), even when what viewers see there is quite similar to what they see here. Sound, in contrast, does not mind borders but instead traverses them. Physical and psychological borders imposed by nation-states and other ideologies do not, and perhaps cannot, obstruct the passage of sound, which courses through the air in all directions.

The potential of sound to cross borders freely is evident in another class of literary sounds, readers' realization of text as sound through vocalized reading. Through formal analysis of literary texts that fundamentally rely on sonic rhetorical devices, specifically Terry Tempest Williams' *Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert*, I argue that in the act of reading aloud the interactions between written text and readers' bodies challenge the oral-literate binary, a historical as well as cultural boundary posited by the likes of Walter Ong and Marshall McLuhan. Though reading today may at first appear to be principally a visual activity, many prose writers attempt to intensify its aural and oral potential by employing rhetorical devices that accent the latent sounds of written text. Repetition, alliteration, consonance, and assonance create textual rhythms that provoke readers to vocalize written text, to read aloud so as to embody language. This embodiment engenders affective responses; by reading aloud, we literally feel written text in and around our throats, tongues, mouths, and facial tissues.

In *Understanding Media: The Extension of Man*, McLuhan argues that "the

medium is the message," which is to say that "the personal and social consequences of any medium—that is, of any extension of ourselves—result from the new scale that is introduced into our affairs by each extension of ourselves, or by any new technology" (7). He suggests that technologies reorganize the senses so that, for instance, when print was introduced humankind entered an age that privileged and extended the visual sense. I find it difficult to argue with McLuhan that technologies influence an age or era and its primary modes of sensory perception. However, the medium of print, or written discourse, does not demand the authority or ascendency of the visual sense. As Richard Cullen Rath notes, "The visible word grew in importance not by competing with the spoken word but by augmenting it" (177). Rath is suggesting that the expansion of written discourse could never eliminate the usefulness of the spoken word, for "distinctive auditory publics" would exist regardless of, if not sometimes as a response to, the stream of writing in the age of press (177). The growth of writing is instead an outgrowth and expansion of the spoken word, an opportunity to listen without a speaker present before us. Throughout the development of silent reading, many readers have continued to vocalize written texts or tell stories aloud as a standard practice, indicating that there has never been a clear break between oral and literate cultures, nor between the auditory and visual senses.

Nevertheless, in general, readers have assimilated, to varying degrees, the notion that our ears and mouths are somehow shut when we read. As Sarah Banet-Weiser notes in the preface to a special issue of *American Quarterly* devoted to sound studies, "when we read, we do not always hear, or are not invited to actively engage aural perception" (vi). Echoing Banet-Weisner, Rath suggests that the readers of his book, *How Early*

America Sounded, must make concerted efforts to "hear the page as well as see it" (x). He argues that the "act of synaesthesia," a visual and aural/oral reading practice, "is only possible to the extent that your auditory imagination is in working order" (x). The writers I examine in this dissertation, to my ears, quite deliberately invite readers to discover in the medium of literature the soundscapes of the real and imagined American West. By attending to literary soundscapes, I argue, we intensify the reading experience and our encounter with the representational places of western literature.

Sound Affects

Literature, the object of literary analysis, often relies explicitly on descriptions of sound in its efforts to construct character, setting, and plot as well as to create what Raymond Williams calls a "structure of feeling," a tightly-woven association between aesthetics and historical moments and places (132).[16] If much literature, specifically literature overtly concerned with place and space, as is Western American literature, depends upon sound, why do trained readers tend to privilege descriptions of images? The visual inclination of many critics, I argue, reflects a more general cultural desire to map place and space as if they are fixed and static entities—a practice that has been enacted, both inside and outside of academia, through gridding and the drawing of boundaries. Such orderly mappings provide structure that is often necessary for people as they operate within and across place and space, but they also serve autocratic purposes, keeping out undesirable threats to a place's order.

Sound sometimes advances human attempts to map place and space in an orderly fashion. According to Blesser and Salter, like sight, sound helps people to measure

space: "When our ability to decode spatial attributes is sufficiently developed using a wide range of acoustic cues, we can readily visualize objects and spatial geometry: we can 'see' with our ears" (2). At the outset of *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening?*, they present space as a set of three-dimensional, geometrical relationships between surfaces and solids.[17] People develop spatial awareness, the ability to measure and survey space, in order to "decode" these relationships and navigate space (2). By claiming "we can 'see' with our ears" (2) or "aurally visualize spatial geometry" (4), Blesser and Salter seem to imply that sound is useful to spatial awareness insofar as it helps people "see" and "visualize" the formal arrangement of space. Yet, when they define "auditory spatial awareness," they distinguish the effects produced by sound from those produced by sight: "Auditory awareness means that there is some neurological reaction to spatial acoustics, including both conscious and unconscious changes to the listener's body state" (14). Sounds produce changes to the body state of the listener. Moreover, because they are "the result of dynamic action, periodic vibrations, sudden impacts, or oscillatory resonances," sounds demonstrate that the formal arrangement of space is itself changing (15). The changes to the body state of the listener are, in effect, physiological and psychological responses to the action and motion transpiring in space.

My dissertation suggests that the sounds and soundscapes of several Western American writers create dynamic, active, and mobile places that a primarily visual aesthetic does not. In Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer*, Cormac McCarthy's *The Crossing*, Terry Tempest Williams' *Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert*, and Charles Bowden's *Murder City: Ciudad Juárez and the Global Economy's New Killing Fields*, literary sounds and soundscapes challenge the geometrical and geographical mapping of

space engendered by vision. These writers use literary sounds to construct affective geographies, mapping places that structure and are structured by people's (or characters') everyday interactions with their environments.[18]

In their production of affective geographies, these writers consider the effects of increasing or decreasing interactions between bodies in Western places. Importantly, in affect theory, bodies are inseparable from mental processes, namely the processing of experiences, emotions, and feelings. As we have seen in *The Octopus*, for example, Presley responds to the wailing sheep by fleeing the scene, but the motion of his body corresponds to a change in mood. According to Nigel Thrift, the term "affect" refers to knowledge that "proceeds in parallel with the body's physical encounters, out of interaction" (61). This knowledge resonates on the surface of the body as the perceiving mind internalizes the information. The effect of this process is not only a change to the body state of a perceiver but also a change in consciousness. As Antonio Negri explains in "What Affects Are Good For," affects "refer equally to the body and the mind" and "involve both reason and the passions" (108).

Scholars have employed the term affect to describe emotions in a general sense, embodied responses to events, and libidinal drives, but drawing from Deleuze's reading of Spinoza, I use the term affect to address interactions in and with place that produce changes in body and mind.[19] Affect manifests in the works I analyze when these interactions transform places or people's understanding of them. I classify the western places of Alexie, McCarthy, Williams, and Bowden as affective geographies because—due largely to the effects of sound—place continuously transforms rather than remaining static over the course of their texts.

Such transformation is not inherently virtuous. As Comer explains in "Assessing the Postwestern," deterritorialization—a Deleuzian transformation of space produced in part by affective relations—is not necessarily "a cause for celebration" as "the globalist flows that are a fact of life under late capitalism may *require* of the subject a disembedded relation to place that is anything but freely chosen" (12). In *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, Deleuze observes that Spinoza categorizes affective relations as good or bad according to the degree or intensity of the changes they produce:

> The good is when a body directly compounds its relation with ours, and, with all or part of its power, increases ours…the bad is when a body decomposes our body's relation, although it still combines with our parts, but in ways that do not correspond to our essence, as when a poison breaks down the blood. (22)

Deleuze argues that Spinoza's "good and bad" are not so much dichotomous ethical categories as points on an affective continuum (22). As I consider affective geographies in contemporary western literature, I am more concerned with the variable intensification of relations between Wests and Westerners than with any fixed and final classification of places, people, and animals in the West.

Sound stirs interactions between bodies and places in literature, and affective geographies of variable intensity are the products of these interactions. The intensity of interaction within a place determines the shape place takes as well as people's relationship to it. In intensely interactive places, people must continuously adapt their relationships with place or else, like Presley, be shocked when they discover that place does not conform to their fantasies. Because interactions intensify relationships, people can utilize them to create collectives or networks that potentially resist the hegemonic organization of place from the top-down by imperialism or globalization. Yet, as Thrift suggests, affect not only generates a "harnessing of the talent of transformation,"

providing a means by which people reconstruct space for libratory and progressive purposes, but also "a whole new means of manipulation by the powerful" (58). In other words, affect activates new forms of agency as well as different means of control and domination. By associating particular sounds with various interactions between people and places in the West, writers accent people's active production of place alongside their periodic inability to control it. These works represent sound as an affective register that people use to navigate places in the West, identifying opportunities and traps for which strictly rational accounts of space do not prepare them.

The Sounds of Silence in Print Literature

Literature, unlike storytelling, is centrally visual. The very act of reading begins with the visualization of letters, words, sentences, and pages of text. Textual signifiers provoke further visualization, as readers reproduce a text's setting, characters, and events in their minds' eye. Certainly, reading is also tactile, a reality made all-the-more tangible in the medium of Braille, whereby the visually impaired feel text, rather than see it. The significance of sound and hearing to contemporary reading practices is comparatively more difficult to define than that of sight and touch, and as a consequence, literary analysis rarely attends to sound to the extent that it does to vision. In other words, the primary cognitive and sensory modes we use to consume literature often constrain our analysis of potentialities less immediately apparent in the form of literature itself.

Although literature is indebted to oral traditions and the voicing of stories, its consumption has become primarily silent. The commercialization of literature in the nineteenth century granted the masses access to literary texts—with limitations, of

course—and subsequently literature was privately and silently consumed, rather than publicly and vocally shared.[20] Today, young readers begin by reading and hearing texts aloud, but they then mature into adolescents and adults who internalize the written word rather than voice it. Many readers perform internal auditions of literary texts, pronouncing and pacing words and sentences without ever opening their mouths. Some readers quietly lip text, occasionally allowing their vocalized reading to be heard in public places. In public, such displays may invite derision and the rolling-of-eyes, as if reading aloud to oneself betrays the silence required of mature reading. The silencing of reading, as Garrett Stewart suggests in *Reading Voices*, affects readers' recognition of the latent, auditory potential of written texts.

Stewart argues that literature generally "disallows" voiced reading, and in cases when "deviant voicing" occurs, "no one would or could in the ordinary sense 'read' that way often or for so long…and still call it reading" (27). This observation, he notes, exposes "the alternating resistances that get in the way of reading, the energies that reading as we know it must for the most part override" (27). Attention to sound, silence, and voice in the practice of reading, I argue, intensifies our experience with literature, producing an energy that exceeds the formal structures of written discourse.

Literary Soundscapes of the American West attempts to reenergize the auditory imagination, in the process of reading as well as more generally in everyday life. Readers can and should pay closer attention to descriptions of sound and the rhythms of prose, which affect their experience with a text and the places it represents. Trained for years in silent reading, they must make concerted efforts to shift sound from a peripheral position, momentarily at least, to the center of their attention.

Such efforts are well worth our while. In the twenty-first century, we are exposed to, and sometimes overwhelmed by, a diverse array of sounds, communicating various messages, many of which we but faintly notice. The fluctuating volume of twenty-first-century life requires listeners to be critically aware of when, where, why, and how sounds affect them.[21] In recent decades, advancements in recording technologies have catalyzed interesting research into acoustic phenomena. A number of these studies have preserved for historical record natural soundscapes threatened by the continued development of wild spaces. These auditory records assign explanatory as well as aesthetic value to sound, in the process marking it as central to our interpretations of place and space. I argue that readers should look to literary texts as additional records of the sounds that resonate in particular places at particular times. Literature charts the effects of sounds on listeners, highlighting variable historical and imaginary attitudes about their significance.

The Soundful West

In her 2002 essay "Reading a Silence: The 'Indian' in the Era of Zapatismo," María Josefina Saldaña-Portillo addresses the production of excess meaning in relation to an indigenous community's performance of silence. She first uses the term excess to refute the idea that "the colonial system…created the 'Indian'" (290). In response to this idea, Saldaña-Portillo argues, "to the degree that indigenous communities *produced meaning and value in excess* of Spanish techniques of governmentality, they also produced a cultural formation that *exceeded* colonialism's subalternized category of the Indian" (emphasis added, 290). Colonialism, that is, should not be thought of as deterministic of indigenous identity and culture postcontact, for indigenous people

produce "new and resistant indigenous identities" within "a colonial regime of difference" (290). Her evaluation of excess intersects with the aims of my dissertation, for the literary sounds I examine respond to and exceed dominant discourses about places and spaces in the American West produced in the context of imperialism and globalization.

The production of "meaning and value in excess" of colonialism takes specific form in Saldaña-Portillo's essay when she documents her experience at an International Meeting for Humanity and against Neoliberalism in Chiapas, Mexico in 1996 (290). There, the "indigenous communities of the Lacandona jungle that make up the Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacíon Nacional (EZLN)" host "five thousand visitors from forty-three countries," all outsiders to the Zapatista revolutionary movement (297). Saldaña-Portillo, a guest at the convention, describes "one of the Zapatistas' performative acts of nationalist identity" that takes place at the opening ceremony:

> By the time Comandante David took the stage and asked for silence, the crowd's cheers for the EZLN and the event seemed irrepressible. Although we quieted down considerably, a low but constant buzz of conversation continued among us. This certainly seemed like silence to us, but Comandante David did not agree. He asked us once again to be quiet. In fact, he insisted on complete silence, repeatedly saying "Hasta que guarden silencio, no podemos empezar" [We cannot begin until you keep silent] and "Hay que guardar diez minutos de silencio antes de poder empezar" [We have to be quiet for ten minutes before we can start]. Europeans, Latin Americans, and U.S. citizens all around grumbled that this seemed unnecessary—even a bit authoritarian. Eventually, after about fifteen minutes, when we realized we had no choice, that he was serious, that there might be a point to this, it happened. We were silent. Completely silent. Not one sigh, not one whisper, not a single chair scraping against the ground. (298)

After a period of discomfort, Saldaña-Portillo begins to imagine "how difficult it must have been for the members and supporters of the Zapatistas to keep silent for ten years—one minute of ours for each year of theirs" (298).[22] The Zapatistas' production of silence

stages "multiple identifications for the visiting (mostly Western) outsiders: with the indigenous Zapatistas, with the symbolic Mexican nation, with ourselves, and among each other" (299). Silence, Saldaña-Portillo discovers, is a baseline for sound that engenders "constitutively fleeting and poignantly inconclusive" identifications among the widely-varied groups of people attending the conference (300). In silence, differences emerge; in particular, she recognizes that her own experience with silence differs from the "subaltern silence" experienced by the Zapatistas (298).[23] Additionally, she comprehends that silence "makes it possible for a universal identification in difference to take place" (302). Silence produces excess meaning, in this example, because it is the "mark of alterity," referring to the subjection of the subaltern identities within a colonial system, and also the "mask of alterity, for in 'silence' the Zapatistas experience community and organize resistance" (300). I dwell on Saldaña-Portillo's essay at length here because it stresses the fluidity of silence and sound. People can compose sound to achieve intended effects, as the Zapatistas have done, but sound is an imposition as well as a strategy, for the colonial subject is repeatedly silenced "in subalternizing discourses of conquest" (300). By accentuating the fluid meanings of sound and silence, writers interested in identity or place usefully imagine emergent ways to navigate the traps and obstacles imposed from above by imperialism and globalization.

By combining the overlapping concerns of western critical regionalism, sound studies, and affect theory with my interest in representations of place in contemporary Western American literature, my dissertation evaluates the productive potential of excess in a selected body of literature. The particular excess that I consider here is made up of a relatively immaterial and transient form, sound and, to be more specific, sounds produced

in literature. To say that sound, in everyday life or in literature, constitutes excess is not to suggest that it is not necessary to or always already resonant in our interpretations of and experiences with place and space. Rather, I argue that sounds produce excess by activating untapped potential and calling upon readers and listeners to identify in place those contingent truths and realities that escape our notice when we view place as a closed and contained form.

The first two chapters of my dissertation focus on fictional texts where sound performs an auxiliary role in the authors' representations of place and space. That is, in these novels, Sherman Alexie and Cormac McCarthy foreground sights and images in their representations of western places. Looking beyond these sight and images, I encounter sounds that productively disturb and unsettle the protagonists' relationships to place. John Smith, in *Indian Killer,* and Billy Parham, in *The Crossing*, form unsteady relationships with place according to the sounds they hear: the beating of drums, the howling of wolves, and the silences left in their absence. As these sounds fade, Parham and Smith struggle to survive in places that require mobile relationships with place and space.

Alexie's *Indian Killer* and McCarthy's *The Crossing* are set in two very different locations in the twentieth-century American West, Seattle and the U.S.-Mexican borderlands, and each location resonates with its own distinct sounds. By focusing on different locations in the West, I aim to stress the diversity of soundscapes in the region and argue that attempts to identify what Neil Campbell calls "a unified, coherent metanarrative" (2) in western literature are ultimately interrupted by the existence of "a complex, messy West" manifesting in many sonic forms (15).[24] Recently,

representations of urban spaces and the U.S.-Mexican borderlands have taken on increasing significance in western studies, in part because they provide points of departure, or lines of flight, from the utopian garden or virgin land that Myth-Image-Symbol scholars discovered in early western writing.[25] The Wests in the first two chapters of the dissertation, I would argue, are equally western, but their "westness" owes more to the tensions that inhabit them than any particular spatial patterns apparent in both (22). The literary sounds and soundscapes of Alexie and McCarthy expose some of the tensions inherent in the twentieth-century West while also portraying opportunities for Westerners, of quite different backgrounds, to revise their relationships to places that have been constrained by U.S. imperialism.

In the first chapter, I focus on a sound that some may associate with the mythological West, Native American drums. Through an analysis of Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer*, I examine the effects of Native American drumming on John Smith's relationship to an urban place, late-twentieth-century Seattle, as well as an indigenous homeland that Smith has never experienced firsthand. Smith was adopted at birth by a white family, and although his parents attempted to expose him to Native American culture in Seattle, he feels disconnected from his cultural heritage. He encounters the sounds of Native American drums at an urban powwow on the University of Washington's campus and imagines that he has been transported to "the wilderness," where he is "free" and can "hunt and trap like a real Indian and grow his hair until it dragged along the ground" (30). In its representation of the sounds of drums and their effects on Smith, Alexie's novel suggests that, amid the din of twentieth-century cities in the American West, people produce sound in order to transform place and effect multiple

identifications. Although Smith ultimately fails to develop a coherent racial or cultural identity, the sounds of drums temporarily transform an urban space that confines him. By focusing on a sound that humans produce in a strained imperial context, this chapter accents the potential for Native Americans, specifically urban Indians, to assert agency within a place by actively producing or listening to sound.

The second chapter examines the effects of howling wolves on a white, teenaged rancher living in the mid-twentieth century U.S.-Mexican borderlands. In Cormac McCarthy's *The Crossing*, the howling of wolves engenders peculiar interactions between the novel's protagonist and places in New Mexico and Mexico. Billy Parham values the wildness that howling wolves signal, and he attempts to preserve the wild quality of the U.S.-Mexican borderlands by returning a captured she-wolf to her native habitat in northern Mexico. In Mexico, he encounters people who place cultural and economic value on the wolf in a different way than American ranchers. A cross-cultural confrontation ensues, and ultimately Billy is forced to modify his relationship to place and space, a task he struggles with mightily. In a borderlands space where not everyone values howling wolves for the wildness they represent, he is unmoored and adrift. With understated attention to the howling of wolves—the author only describes howls on a few occasions—McCarthy highlights the dangers of attaching oneself to any one particular idea of a place.

The final two dissertation chapters analyze nonfictional texts—Terry Tempest Williams' *Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert* and Charles Bowden's *Murder City: Ciudad Juárez and the Global Economy's New Killing Fields*—that further address tensions in western places. Williams and Bowden shift our attention to the twenty-first-

century American West, and unlike the novels of McCarthy and Alexie, their works overtly privilege sound. Williams' *Red* and Bowden's *Murder City* demand that readers attend to sound because it represents local knowledge about pressing ethical concerns. These texts employ orality and aurality, respectively, to highlight the destruction of wilderness in the American Southwest, for Williams, and the increasing violence in Juárez, Mexico, for Bowden.

Terry Tempest Williams' *Red* not only creates literary sounds by describing the sounds and silences of Utah's redrock deserts but also by provoking her readers to perform the text aloud, to treat it as oral literature, written text that ought to be voiced. In "The Erotic Landscape," Williams advises her readers to participate in the landscape and to practice "eroticism," a "being in relation" that "calls the inner life into play" (106). Eroticism, she notes, contrasts with pornography, whereby people engage objects solely by looking at them as spectators. This distanced viewing of the landscape prevents people from developing intimate relationships with the land through participation. By encouraging her readers to participate in the landscape, Williams hopes to foment protection of wilderness, specifically in the Southwest desert. Yet, reading, she seems to suspect, potentially maintains our distance from the landscape; we often read at a remove from the places we are reading about and thus remain spectators. Williams transgresses that distance by creating a literary soundscape that readers participate in. She employs rhetorical devices that stress the auditory quality of language, and by reading her work aloud, readers embody language that is intimately invested in the western desert.

In the context of a U.S.-Mexico borderlands city's violence, Bowden uses silence to represent disenfranchised people's lack of agency, their inability to do anything about

the conditions that govern their lives and deaths. According to Bowden, Juárez's silence is "not the silence of the grave or the silence of the church, but the speechlessness of terror" (128). As a response to silence's unsettling intrusion into a presumably noisy urban space, Bowden employs narrative voice to construct an audible terrain, where he amplifies the city's prevailing violence. Bowden's voices return noise to the city, and in this case, noise is not unwanted sound. Narrative voice—whether Bowden's voice or his performance of other voices—makes noise and, in so doing, disturbs a silence that he suggests "like protest, is the drug of our time, the way we do something by doing nothing" (36). By creating sound and commanding an audile mode of attention, this text attempts to challenge a potentially destructive historical process, transnational capitalism's production of disempowered people in a Mexican border city.

The dissertation concludes with a brief analysis of the ways policymakers, political activists, scientists, scholars, and everyday people have used sound to produce places in the American West. My aim in this conclusion is to align—but not consolidate—the efforts of Alexie, McCarthy, Williams, and Bowden with what seems to be an increasing attention to the functions and potentials of sound in the production of place in the West.

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[1] Kahn, Douglas. *Noise Water Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999. 2.
[2] Norris, Frank. *The Octopus: A Story of California*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1901. 48.
[3] Saldaña-Portillo, María Josefina. "Reading a Silence: The 'Indian' in the Era of Zapatismo." *Nepantla: Views from South* 3.2 (2002): 302.
[4] Throughout *The Octopus*, Norris represents a variety of sounds as murmurs, including rain (90), freshly tilled soil (123), a fountain (135), the sounds of a guitar (206), and the sounds of "innumerable" rabbits running (213).
[5] In *Place: A Short Introduction*, Timothy Creswell defines landscape as "the shape—the material topography—of a piece of land" and notes that "Landscape is an intensely visual idea" (10-11). According to Creswell, "We do not live in landscapes—we look at them" (11). Similarly, in *The Lure of the Local*, Lucy Lippard notes that landscape is "place at a distance, visual rather than sensual, seen rather than felt in all its affective power" (8).
[6] In "Border Literary Histories, Globalization, and Critical Regionalism," José Limón claims that critical attention to globalization in literary studies, which gathered steam in the early- to mid-90s, have prevented

some scholars from examining the continued importance of the region, the local, and place. He suggests that the concept of critical regionalism develops "a renewal of regionalist thinking not in any isolated sense, but rather *within* yet in *tension* with globalization" (166-67).

[7] The cross-section of Wests that I examine highlights what Krista Comer recently called "the problem of specifying the West" (3). In the introduction to a 2013 special issue of Western American Literature, Comer notes that this problem is "productive," as by its attention to different types of western places, western cultural production in recent decades has clearly deviated from the "shoot-em'-up Old West or pastoral romance" that in previous times imagined a singular West (3). The West of "familiar popular mythologies" often failed to attend to the development of urban spaces and non-White cultures and was clearly presented as a national form, an extension and endorsement of American exceptionalism (3). For Comer, as for most current scholars in western studies, "West is defined broadly to refer to all of North America that either critically or historically has been considered West, including comparative studies of the American West that cross regional or national boundaries" (4). She adds, "much that is brilliantly western comes from the liminal spaces of elsewhere—spaghetti Westerns a take-away example" (4).

[8] Here, I would add that the primacy of vision may shape the perception that sound is ineffectual. A number of sound theorists that I cite in this dissertation dichotomize sight and sound, with some exceptions (Erlmann 2010). For an alternative perspective see *Downcast Eyes: The Denigration of Vision in Twentieth-Century French Thought*, where Martin Jay argues that during the twentieth century criticism and philosophy from France became increasingly critical of ocularcentrism, particularly in strands of theory that examine gender and sexuality.

[9] Similarly, Mary Pat Brady observes, "The frontier's abstraction meant that as a space it could be understood as isotropic and conceptualized as the same everywhere; it was emptied of meaning except as understood through some formal, seemingly scientific exterior schema, such as a map or grid" (3). According to Brady, the "formal" gridding of the frontier produced an "abstraction" of space "in the service of capital flows" that "entailed a shift from the undifferentiated spaces conceptualized by Apaches, Yaquis, and Mexicanos to the conquered and closed frontier" (3-4). It also resulted in "space's abstraction into geometric homogeneities, its reconceptualization as quantitative, its immersion in exchange relations, and its vitalization of the visual as a primary epistemological model" (4). In Chapter 2 of this dissertation, I address Henri Lefebvre's conceptualization of abstract space in relation to Cormac McCarthy's representation in *The Crossing* of the Parham brothers' experiences in the U.S.-Mexican borderlands. Brady uses Lefebvre's work as the primary voice in discussions about abstract space.

[10] Creswell asserts, "in the post-enlightenment world studies of place were often relegated to 'mere description' while space was given the role of developing scientific law-like generalizations. In order to make this work people had to be removed from the scene. Space was not embodied but empty. This empty space could then be used to develop a kind of spatial mathematics—a geometry" (19).

[11] See Comer, Krista. "Introduction: Assessing the Postwestern." *WAL* 48.1-2 (2013): 3-15.

[12] For an overview of critical regionalism in architectural studies, see Campbell's *The Rhizomatic West* (46-54). The key voices in Campbell's assessment of the development of critical regionalism include Kenneth Frampton, Lianne Lefaivre, and Alexander Tzonis. Campbell weds the more explicitly architectural focus of these scholars to critical regionalism as a cultural studies practice in works by Catherine Slessor, John Brinkerhoff Jackson, and Lewis Mumford, among others.

[13] Bowden, Charles. *Blood Orchid: An Unnatural History of America*. New York: Random House, 1995. Campbell uses this quotation in the introduction to *The Rhizomatic West*, suggesting that it is "the task of critical regionalists to disrupt this flow of ideas [the perfect, mythic, and essentialized spaces of western mythology in writing] through the activation and articulation of the 'dreaded outside'" (5).

[14] In "*Klahowya Tillicum*: Coming Home to the Stories and Songs of the West Coast," Chamberlain claims that Laforme's stories "match any I have ever heard, anywhere—and that includes a lifetime of listening around the world" (115). Laforme is a prospector, guide, and everyday storyteller from Revelstoke, in southeastern British Columbia.

[15] They add that "when collaborating and reinforcing each other, the aural and the visual sensory systems combine their respective experience of size, merging volume and linear extent" (21). The aural and the visual sensory systems collaborate as we use them to sense and interpret space. This observation, to some extent, seems too obvious to require mention; however, as Campbell and Brady, among others, note, the visual sensory system has been fundamentally important to the orderly gridding of western places. Thus, even as we acknowledge the collaboration between the senses, we must also always consider the ways in

which the visual has been and is still being used to maintain boundaries that benefit some people and cultures while constraining others.

[16] Structures of feeling include meanings and values lived and felt as well as matters of impulse, restraint, and tone. Williams writes, "we are concerned with meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt…We are talking about characteristic elements of impulse, restraint and tone; specifically affective elements of consciousness and relationships: not feeling against thought, but thought as felt and feeling as thought: practical consciousness of a present kind, in a living and inter-relating continuity" (132). Structures of feeling are produced through social experience as well as through semiotic formulations.

[17] Douglas Kahn attends to sounds' contact with surfaces, specifically the ground, and accents the geometrical relationships in space that produce and are revealed by sound: "To hear past the historical insignificance assigned to sounds, we need to hear more than their sonic or phonic content. We need to know where they might touch the ground, momentarily perhaps, even as they dissipate in air" (4).

[18] A visual aesthetic often contributes to artists' construction of affective geographies. Through his analysis of the experimental video art of Bill Viola, Nigel Thrift argues that visual representations of the face highlight "the face as a primary composer of affect" (73). According to Thrift, "Viola sees the face as a colour wheel of emotions and constantly places emotion together as sequences which illustrate this shifting spectrum of affect" (73-74). In Western studies, Stephen Tatum's *In The Remington Moment* addresses the production of affect in the visual art of Western painter Frederic Remington.

[19] In his essay "Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect," Nigel Thrift evaluates four critical "translations" of affect that "work with a notion of broad tendencies and lines of force: emotion as motion both literally and figuratively" (60). As mobilized emotion, affect is not only responsive to events but also participatory in them.

[20] Citing data from Febvre and Martin's *The Coming of the Book*, Benedict Anderson observes that the commercialization of literature occurred much earlier than the nineteenth century: "in the 40-odd years between the publication of the Gutenberg Bible and the close of the fifteenth century, more than 20,000,000 printed volumes were produced in Europe" (33). Yet, the coexistence of a large literate population and access to print texts did not occur until later. In centuries prior to the 1900s, as Anderson suggests, literacy was largely limited to the upper classes, providing a means to consolidate power on the basis of class status.

[21] In *Spaces Speak, Are you Listening?: Experiencing Aural Architecture*, Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter note the "cultural relativism for all sensory experience" and suggest that, to evaluate sound effectively, listeners must "ascertain how acoustic attributes are perceived: by whom, under what conditions, for what purposes, and with what meanings" (3).

[22] Saldaña-Portillo provides a short history of the Zapatista revolutionary movement in her essay. The "ten years" of Zapatista silence she refers to begins in the 80s, when following "a sharp decline in funding for agriculture" in Mexico the EZLN organizes its resistance to the government's economic policies, which were detrimental to indigenous communities' ways of life.

[23] Here, Saldaña-Portillo borrows from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's conceptualization of subaltern silence in "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Saldaña-Portillo stresses "the complexity of possible meanings encoded in subaltern silence" (298) and "the absolute limits of Western knowledge when confronted with subaltern silence and iteration" (299).

[24] Campbell argues that this metanarrative claims, "In the West…is the evidence of a nation forged out of the intense and diverse experiences of the so-called open, vacant frontier, transforming encounter and contact into a closed, destined relationship of evolution and progress toward the production of an essentially rooted American character" (2).

[25] For noteworthy examples, see Henry Nash Smith's *Virgin Land* and Leo Marx's *Machine in the Garden*. These texts provide impressive and praiseworthy analysis of representations of the frontier in American literature, but they also focus on writers and texts that fit (or that critics fit to) specific representational patterns, creating a typology that does not always accommodate alternative perspectives on western places.

CHAPTER 2

DRUMBEATS: URBAN SPACE, NATIVE PLACE, AND TRANSNATIONAL HUB-MAKING IN SHERMAN ALEXIE'S *INDIAN KILLER*

Pause. Tap. Tap.
~Sherman Alexie, *Indian Killer*[1]

> *The outside world is forgotten, overtaken by a Native American world. This spiritual unmapping of the white world gives Indian people the time and the space to reconnect to a physical and spiritual reality where Indian people truly belong…[The values of respect embedded within tribal traditions] can then be brought into the public sphere to transform a non-Indian, hegemonic culture and community to one that reflects a more respectful Indigenous society.*
>
> ~Renya K. Ramirez, *Native Hubs*[2]

As I note in the introduction, the fictional works I examine in the first two chapters of this dissertation do not necessarily stress literary sounds in their representations of twentieth-century places in the American West. Instead, in relatively understated ways, Sherman Alexie and Cormac McCarthy use literary sounds to represent and examine the intensity—or excess meaning and feeling—that place accrues when their characters engage in audile spatial practices and modes of attention. The term audile, for my purposes, describes practices, techniques, and postures that make "the world audible

in new ways" when writers have sound on the mind (Keeling and Kun 449).[3]

In the introductory essay to *American Quarterly's* 2011 special issue on sound in American Studies, Kara Keeling and Josh Kun attribute the term audile to Jonathan Sterne, whose book *The Audible Past* observes the development of "new listening practices and sonic epistemes…born through the massive transfigurations of eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century society, technology and culture" (Keeling and Kun 449). Analyzing literary texts set years after the close of the period Sterne examines, the first two chapters of this dissertation assess organic, one might tentatively say rooted, forms of listening that are not explicitly connected to or strained by the rise of "sound production technologies like the stethoscope, the telephone, and the phonograph" (449).[4] For my purposes, audility does not coincide with the development of technologies but rather with transforming and transformative listening practices that are mediated by desire as much as, if not more than, the increasing instrumentalization of sound during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. In places in the American West, people have listened to the sounds of drums and the howling of wolves over the course of many generations, and the practices they have used to understand and interpret drums and howls are often rooted in local as well as regional traditions and customs. Alexie and McCarthy represent these particular sounds as affective forces and energies that, in the context of globalization in the mid- to late-twentieth century, require different "listening practices" from people than those employed by their elders (Keeling and Kun 449). In their novels, these authors attempt to bridge the rooted listening practices of the past to increasingly mediated audile modes of attention that developed during a century of sound, the twentieth.

To a degree, literary sounds are synecdochal in *Indian Killer* and *The Crossing*, as, for instance, the drumming in Alexie's novel signals the cultural practice and form of which it is a part, the urban powwow. Synecdoche intensifies the meaning of a part, as the part fibrously connects to and perhaps for a moment directs the other parts that make up the whole. The circular structure of the powwow serves as an example. Reflecting the traditional spatial organization of Native American rituals, at contemporary powwows, drums and drummers are positioned in the center of the ceremony, and a community circles around them. The rhythm of drums directs the movement of individual dancers, nodes within a continuously expanding and retracting circle that responds to drumbeats and song. The powwow maintains its circular structure, but the shifting positions of bodies and the modulating pulse of drums within this space demonstrate its continuous transformation. The sounds of drums play one among many parts in the transformation of the circle, a geometric space, into a meaningful and sacred place. Their sound is crucial to *Indian Killer's* representation of an urban West in late twentieth-century Seattle. It intensifies interactions between people and place, provoking urban Indians to transform particular sites in the city into undeniably Native places. Such transformation is, as Deleuze and Guattari would have it, a creative potentiality that repeatedly undermines the striation of space into a hegemonic form.

In Alexie's Seattle, this spatial hegemony is part of a colonial and postcolonial historical process that structures the city. There, the global capitalism of the late-twentieth century extends the effects of U.S. imperialism, as multi- and transnational corporations construct skyscrapers that mark the dominance of this urban space by investors headquartered elsewhere. These skyscrapers blanket downtown Seattle, and

John Smith, the protagonist of the novel, looks at "the city's skyline" and perceives "the myth and lies of its construction, the myths and lies of its architects" (132). The content of these "myths and lies" is among the many mysteries that this crime thriller/detective story implicitly examines (132).[5] While the plot centers on the identity of the Indian Killer, a phantasmal man striking fear into Seattle's white population with seemingly random acts of violence, the city's effect on the construction of identities by urban Indians is a more convoluted mystery that Alexie urges his readers to disentangle. In this chapter, I track this mystery by examining the novel's two central urban Indian characters, John Smith and Marie Polatkin, who demonstrate quite different attitudes toward Seattle as a place for Native American identification.

Traditional Songs

Sherman Alexie's 1996 novel *Indian Killer* begins in an "Indian Health Service hospital in the late sixties. On this reservation or that reservation. Any reservation, a particular reservation" (3). The hospital is the place of origin for the novel's protagonist, John Smith, a Native American adopted at birth by a white family, the Smiths. As the narrator's ambiguity makes clear from the start, the place is, in many ways, no place at all. Social and cultural geographer Timothy Creswell explains that, according to most geographers, places are "located": "They have fixed objective co-ordinates on the Earth's surface" (7).[6] Moreover, he suggests, "we begin to approach 'place'" when we replace "a set of numbers [fixed objective co-ordinates] with a name" (2). John's place of origin, which he invents in an effort to reconstruct an irretrievable past, is neither located nor named. The generic name, "Indian Health Service hospital," does not distinguish the

hospital from others like it, conjuring instead a shadow of a place that could be located anywhere, on "this," "that," "any," or "a particular" reservation (3). John's fictional construction of a relatively indiscernible place reflects his anxiety about the unknowability of his origins, which become even more difficult for him to imagine because of his cumulative experiences as a displaced Indian in late twentieth-century Seattle.

Alexie represents this city, located in the Pacific Northwest and named for a nineteenth-century chief of the Duwamish and Suquamish tribe, as a postcolonial urban space where John feels out of place. John registers the colonial legacy of Seattle in the mostly Scandinavian neighborhood of Ballard, where he lives as an adult:

> Since the first days of their colonization of the Americas, European immigrants had strived to make the New World look exactly like the Old. They either found similar geographical or climatic locations, such as the Swedes had in Minnesota and the Germans in North Dakota, or they plowed, tunneled, clear-cut, and sculpted the land into something ethnically pleasing. (73)

John is as disoriented in twentieth-century Seattle, "sculpted" by European immigrants as well as financial investors dispersed across the globe, as he is confused about his place of origin (73). To convey John's disorientation, the third-person narrator describes his haphazard navigation of the city, observing that John is uncertain about where he walks or "how he came to arrive at his apartment building in Ballard, the Scandinavian neighborhood of Seattle north of downtown" (73). Alexie's representation of this aimless wandering does not evoke the liberating tactics of DeCerteau's street-level walkers in "Walking in the City," who "affirm, suspect, try out, transgress, respect, etc." the possible trajectories they could take through a city (99).[7] Rather, John's walking represents his utter incomprehension of Seattle. His struggle to navigate the city signals his

displacement as a Native American immersed in a field of cultural signs he cannot understand, namely the signs of imperialism in a progressive U.S. metropolis.

His sense of displacement as an adult in Seattle carries over from the invented primal scene at the hospital, where he is taken from his "Indian" mother at birth and given up for adoption to a white family in the suburbs of Seattle (4). The opening chapter, titled "Mythology," foregrounds the text's investigation of the importance of racial and cultural identity to John's experience with place-making and displacement in a late-twentieth-century city in the Pacific Northwest—a city and region with a long and complicated history of Native presence. In *Native Seattle: Histories from the Crossing-Over Place*, a revisionist history of the lived experiences of Native peoples in the city, Coll Thrush attempts to untangle that complicated history. Thrush suggests that attention to Seattle's Native history is often blurred by "the moral of the urban Indian story as we think we know it: that Native people in the city are barely people; they are instead shades of the past, linked almost mystically to nature" (9). Alexie's novel, I argue, dwells on the process by which John Smith internalizes that moral and, as a consequence, fails to understand the city as a place where he and other Native Americans can construct Native identities and communities.

As an adult, John Smith dwells on his identity as a Native American, which for him only runs skin-deep. He senses that his dark skin tone marks him as "another anonymous, silent Skin," and this anxiety about race only helps to obscure the particulars of his past as well as the opportunities for Native identification available to him in the present (35). John's unfamiliarity with his birth culture leads him to invent the narrative that opens the novel. Alexie makes clear at the start that his protagonist knows very little

about his cultural heritage or tribal affiliation.[8] When John imagines his birth in the opening chapter, "his mother is sometimes Navajo. Other times she is a Lakota. Often, she is from the same tribe as the last Indian woman he has seen on television" (4). Two paragraphs later, Alexie's narrator reiterates the ambiguity of John's tribal identification:

> John's mother is Navajo or Lakota. She is Apache or Seminole. She is Yakima or Spokane. Her dark skin contrasts sharply with the white sheets, although they are dirty. (4)

The repetitive listing of tribal names suggests that John does not distinguish between tribes, each of which, though culturally distinct, blurs into the others; as a result of this blurring, he only understands his native identity and that of his birth mother on the basis of the contrast between "dark skin" and dirty "white sheets" (4). This not too subtle reference to racial difference reveals the force of race in John's identification as an Indian. Not only do the differences between Native cultures blur in his imagination but so too do the associations between tribes and particular places. Although the Spokane are based in eastern Washington and the Seminole in Florida (and later Oklahoma), John eliminates all placed-based particulars, creating in essence a personalized mythology inattentive to the embeddedness of Native cultures in located, named, and meaningful places.

Yet, even as race seems to overwrite culture and place in his creation story, John imagines the hospital where he was born as inhabited by sounds and rhythms that mark the presence of Native Americans. After assigning the hospital a generic name and failing to locate it, he observes an "old Indian woman in a wheelchair singing traditional songs to herself, tapping a rhythm on her armrest, right index finger, tapping, tapping. Pause. Tap. Tap" (3). She stops tapping momentarily when she hears newborn John

crying, and then "forgets why she is listening" to his cries and "returns to her own song and the tapping, tapping. Pause. Tap. Tap" (5). John's attention to the basic rhythms accompanying "traditional songs" helps him to shape an otherwise indistinct fictional space into a place, a site of personal and cultural trauma inhabited by other Indians (3). Places should be located and named as Creswell suggests, but perhaps more importantly they should be "meaningful," provoking personal and cultural attachments, and should "have some relationship to humans and the human capacity to produce and consume meaning" (Creswell 7). John, for instance, reconstructs the sonority of the hospital in an attempt to attach himself to Native American culture and identify himself as a Native American. Sound, or here music, precipitate his efforts to "produce and consume" Native meaning in the institutional space of the hospital (Creswell 7). The tapping of the old woman contrasts with "linoleum floors swabbed with gray water" and "walls painted white a decade earlier, now yellowed and peeling" (Alexie 3). The hospital is, to use French anthropolgist Marc Augés term, a non-place—cleaned with dirty water and decorated in fading paint—that the old woman's tapping transforms, momentarily at least, into a place resonating with tradition.

For Augé, non-places are the product of "the spatial overabundance of the present" in the late twentieth-century and the "changes of scale" brought on by "the spectacular acceleration of means of transport" (34). Non-places are those places people pass through—"high-speed roads and railways, interchanges, airports"—en route to places (34). The Indian Health Service hospital provides a particularly intriguing representation of a non-place, for while John quickly departs it by helicopter following his birth, the old woman appears to make it her home. In this scene, then, a transient

place or non-place passed through by John simultaneously functions as a rooted and local place, a home that the woman constructs through action and performance, specifically the production of music.

Following his birth, John is almost immediately whisked away from his birth mother and loaded by a nurse onto a helicopter that transports him to his adoptive parents in Bellevue, Washington, a suburb of Seattle. John's constructed memory here turns into a nightmare as "suddenly this is a war," and the helicopter pilot/gunman "strafes the reservation with explosive shells," violently erasing the site John hopes will connect him to his past (6). Aboard the helicopter, John cries "uselessly," his wailing unheard over "the *whomp-whomp* of the helicopter blades" and "the roar of the gun, the chopper" (6). Whereas the old woman paused her tapping and singing to mark the event of John's birth, stopping to listen to his cries, the gunner effectively silences John, who aboard the helicopter perceives "Noise, heat" and cries "louder than before, trying to be heard" (7). The juxtaposition of traditional music and violent "Noise" in "Mythology" prepares for the novel's proceeding attention to the production of place through music in the context of Native American diaspora (7).

I specifically analyze the production of place through music as it resonates in Alexie's representation of Native drumming at an urban powwow in Seattle. Through a detailed examination of this scene, I argue that in *Indian Killer* ceremonial music potentially enables John Smith, a displaced Native American, to participate in the production of a distinctly Native place. The novel presents the urban powwow as a missed opportunity for him to construct Native identity in the absence of a remembered homeland or past. Placing critical pressure on John's inability to capitalize on this

opportunity, Alexie introduces Marie Polatkin, a confident Spokane Indian girl who attends the University of Washington and serves as "the activities coordinator for the Native Americans Students Alliance at the University" (31). Marie embodies the potential of urban powwows to affirm and intensify the cultural identities of Native Americans who no longer live, or in some cases never lived, on reservation or tribal lands and are disconnected by space and time from their families and communities. Alexie's representation of Marie suggests that, in a late-twentieth-century American city, Native American identities are constructive processes engendered by Native peoples' affective transformation of place through ritual performance.[9] In his analysis of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, another novel addressing the experiences of urban Indians during the late twentieth century, David Rice notes the "transformative quality of ceremony" and suggests that ceremonies "must be allowed to meet the changing needs of the people who perform them" (127). As mobile practices that accommodate "changing needs," contemporary Native American ceremonies challenge "Euramerican stereotypes of Native American ritual as codified and stagnant and thus unable to survive the change of Euramerican encroachment and expansion" (127). Much to the dismay of some Native American elders and traditionalists, in Alexie's novel, the powwow is a ritual or ceremony that breaks from tradition in order to accommodate the needs of urban Indians in Seattle for connections that cross tribal and national lines.[10]

As a critical framework for my analysis of drumming and urban powwows in *Indian Killer*, I employ Renya K. Ramirez's conception of native hubs, which, she explains, "suggest how landless Native Americans maintain a sense of connection to their tribal homelands and urban spaces through participation in cultural circuits and

maintenance of social networks, as well as shared activity with other Native Americans in the city and on the reservation" (3). For Ramirez, the hub is a transnational, geographical concept that emphasizes "Indians' nation-to-nation relationship[s]," nation here implying tribal nations as well as nation-states—primarily, for her purposes, the United States, Canada, and Mexico (23). She uses the term transnational to "accentuate Native peoples' special status in relationship to the nation-state"—a status influenced by a history of conquest and dispossession of Native peoples in North America—as well as to acknowledge their "experience of living at the interstice of various cultural and political communities" (14). Many twenty-first-century Native Americans, Ramirez observes, establish intertribal and transnational connections, creating hubs, "geographic places" that "provide a space for Indians to renew a sense of Indian culture and identity" and "give Native American activists a community from which to organize and demand their rights in the larger public sphere, in order to belong in a world that often denies their very existence" (58).[11] Included among these hubs are urban powwows and other ritual gatherings that transform high school gymnasiums, college campuses, and other public locations into places "where Indians...come together to share their feelings of common identity" (63).

Ramirez emphatically notes that in these hubs Native people utilize affect, for it "assists in [their] empowerment and struggles to belong" as members of tribal communities and citizens of nation-states (19). Affect is particularly important in "citizenship debates" among Native Americans and other subordinated groups "because citizenship has been a white, male enterprise that emphasizes reason and rationality" (19). Critiquing an imperialistic privileging of reason and rationality, she adds,

> White women and people of color are disenfranchised in the public sphere, because of the white, masculinist notion that assumes subordinated groups cannot act with reason but only according to feelings. We cannot fully belong in the public domain, because the emotional state of disenfranchised groups will disrupt the reason and rationality that should control the public sphere. (ibid.)

Ramirez suggests that the concept of the hub "can be brought into conversation with gendered notions of politics and belonging" (18) so that analyses of "the highly charged and personal manner in which many disenfranchised groups experience citizenship in their everyday life" do not "leave out such potentially volatile concerns as emotions" (19). In other words, the emotions of Native American activists contribute to their reasoned and rational pursuit for belonging in the public sphere, both on and off reservation lands.[12] Strategically gendering both the hub and affect as feminine, she argues women are often at the forefront of hub-making and use affect to challenge "dominant notions of citizenship" (18).[13] The hub-making in *Indian Killer* is, in fact, organized by a young Spokane Indian woman, Marie Polatkin, who often boils over with emotion but usually understands how to redirect it productively. In view of Ramirez's attention to the role of affect in Native people's construction of hubs, in my analysis, I attend explicitly to the ways that Alexie's novel represents the transformed University of Washington campus as an affective geography, a place that deterritorializes imperialistic space by facilitating interactions between Native Americans of various tribes.

The Sensuous Production of Place

In "Sounding Out the City: Music and the Sensuous Production of Place," Sara Cohen posits "music's effectiveness in stimulating a sense of identity, in preserving and transmitting cultural memory, and in establishing the sensuous production of place"

(287). Music engenders a "sensuous" production of place, she argues, by its "peculiar embodiment of movement and collectivity" (269); it generates "physical pleasures," resonates "within the body," stimulates "movement and emotion," emphasizes "the intensity of experience," and produces "a sense of identity and belonging" (277). Her essay specifically examines the experiences of a migrant Jewish community in Liverpool, England, post-World War II, and Cohen suggests that "place, for migrant communities, is something constructed through music with an intensity not found elsewhere in their social lives" (284). The "intensity" engendered by music for migrant communities, according to Cohen, reflects their collective memory of "long-distance travel" passed on by story from one generation to the next (285). Music provokes "sensual and expressive movements" that, like the memory of "long-distance journeys" and the repetitive motions they entail, can have "a deep impact upon individual and collective memory and experiences of place, and upon emotions and identities associated with place" (285). Cohen's essay, which generalizes about migrant communities' production of place through music, raises a number of important questions about the place-making functions of music and dance rituals for diasporic Native American communities displaced from tribal homelands in the United States. If the production of place through music is, as Cohen posits, "always a contested and ideological process" (269), what are the central pressures that influence, strain, or engender Native Americans' production of place in North America? More specifically, how, if at all, is this productive process intensified in an urban environment? Finally, how do urban Native people's construction of hubs enable them to navigate twentieth-century cities in the U.S. and cultivate a sense of belonging to these cities as well as to tribal lands where many Indians were born and

grew up?

In the third chapter of *Indian Killer*, "Owl Dancing at the Beginning of the End of the World," Alexie begins to sketch the intricacies of Native American sensuous production of place through music by attending closely to John's experience at an "illegal powwow, not approved by the University [of Washington]" (32-33). After John gets off of work one day—he works construction on the fortieth floor of an unfinished skyscraper—he wanders through the streets of Seattle and eventually arrives at a field of grass. When he arrives there, he imagines that he has entered the wilderness:

> He had made it to the wilderness. He was free. He could hunt and trap like a real Indian and grow his hair until it dragged along the ground. No, it was a manicured lawn on the University of Washington Campus, and John could hear drums. (30)

John's association of "real Indians" with wilderness reflects the persistent influence of the frontier myth, a spatial metanarrative that affects representations of Native American culture (by both Native and non-Native writers) in U.S. cultural and historical production (30). According to this myth, if there is a place for Indians in the United States, it is in the wilderness, a place that colonizing white settlers attempt to conquer during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the name of progress. As an extension of this myth, cities, which Thrush suggests are "an outgrowth of broader American ideas about progress," are not places where Native people "belong" (xv). The drums John hears on the U of W campus provoke him to challenge his own internalization of the branching spatial narratives associated with the frontier myth, which locate Native people in the wilderness and conceal their presence in urban places. The drums, as well as the singing and dancing that accompany them, disrupt the noise of colonialism and imperialism implicit in these narratives—noise that echoes for John in Seattle.[14]

After he recognizes his location on a "manicured lawn," John observes that he "had been on campus a few times but had never heard drums there" (30-31). He responds to the unexpected and surprising sound of drums by mobilizing his body, much as Presley does when he hears the wailing sheep in *The Octopus*. However, unlike Presley, John walks "toward the source of the drums," rather than fleeing the sound (31). Outside of an auditorium, he encounters "two drums, a few singers and dancers, and dozens of Indians watching the action" (31). In response to the music, the assembly of Indians "trample on the well-kept lawn" (33), dancing an owl dance while John silently stands off to the side and "pretends to be a real Indian" (35).[15] Though he has learned about owl dances "through years of observation and practice," John identifies himself as a "fraud at urban powwows" and is concerned that his peers will "discover that he was an Indian without a tribe" (ibid.). John is both attracted to and uncomfortable at urban powwows, and the concurrence of these feelings illustrates the affective potential of the powwow as well as the extent of his alienation from Native American culture.

His sense of alienation from other Indians is briefly unseated when Marie Polatkin, the organizer of the powwow, invites him to dance. At first, John fails to stay in rhythm with the music, but as the drums "drown out all the other noises in his head" and he "concentrates on the music," Marie tells him "You're getting it now" (39). In the concluding section of this chapter, I will address the significance of the "other noises" in John's head, which communicate his internalization of racist and imperialist ideologies in the United States. Here, I would like to highlight a momentary interruption to the noise, which occurs when he briefly participates in the sensuous production of place through music. For a fleeting moment, John draws closer to the pleasures of belonging to a place

and an intertribal community of dancers who embody Native traditions "with dazzling eyes and bright smiles" (38). He recognizes "so much happiness so close to him," and yet cannot "touch it" (38). When the drums go "suddenly silent," he returns to his anxious meditation about his Native identity and begins, once again, only to think of himself as Indian in comparison to white people: "John was not surprised that Indians had always terrified white people…Even in his flannel shirt and blue jeans, John knew he was intimidating" (39-40). John's sudden relapse into racial paranoia should not obscure his momentary participation in a transnational Native community. For as long as the music lasts and John responds to it through dance, he remains temporarily attached to place, a mobile native hub that transforms the hegemonic space of the university into what Ramirez calls a "safe world" where "identity, culture, health, and well-being are supported" (65).

The urban powwow provides John with the opportunity to connect to and interact with Native American culture:

> Even though he had felt like a fraud at urban powwows, he had always loved them…Through years of observation and practice, he had learned how an Indian was supposed to act at a powwow. When he got old enough to go without Daniel and Olivia [his adopted parents], he could pretend to be a real Indian. He could sit in a huge crowd of Indians and be just another anonymous, silent Skin. (35)

Clearly, the usefulness of the powwow as a hub connecting John to Native American culture is limited by his sense that he can only "pretend to be a real Indian" (35). In contrast, for Marie, who introduces herself to John when he wanders toward the drums, urban powwows create a cultural circuit through which she repeatedly travels. A Spokane Indian, vocal student at the university, and Native American activist, Marie embodies the transnationalism articulated by Renya Ramirez in *Native Hubs*. In the

following section, I evaluate Marie's participation in and organization of the urban powwow in relation to the process of deterritorialization, characterized by Deleuze and Guattari in *A Thousand Plateaus*. Sound, here, takes a backseat as I situate the urban powwow, a mobile cultural form, within a broader discussion of the production of place by twenty-first-century urban Indians. By organizing the urban powwow, Marie initiates a process of deterritorialization that transforms the city of Seattle. This process helps Marie effect multiple identifications, create a transnational identity, and traverse places produced from the top-down through imperialistic practices.

Absolutely Sweet Marie

Drawing from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's conception of deterritorialization, I suggest that the urban powwow temporarily transforms a striated space, a city, into a sonorous place of Native presence. According to Deleuze and Guattari, the city is "striated space par excellence" (481), and the striated is "that which intertwines fixed and variable elements, produces an order and succession of distinct forms, and organizes horizontal melodic lines and vertical harmonic planes" (478). The smooth, in contrast, is "the continuous variation, continuous development of form," a "fusion of harmony and melody in favor of the production of properly rhythmic values" (478). Smooth space is "filled by events" and "occupied by intensities, wind and noise, forces, and sonorous and tactile qualities"; it is "a space of affects, more than one of properties," an "intensive rather than extensive space" (479). It is an affective geography specifically organized and disorganized according to sound; Deleuze and Guattari's interest in the smooth, rhizomatic places produced by sound influences the readings I will

do in subsequent chapters, where I attend specifically to their conception of the refrain.

They submit that striated space is defined by "the requirements of long-distance vision: constancy of orientation, invariance of distance through an interchange of inertial points of reference, interlinkage by immersion in an ambient milieu, constitution of a central perspective" (494). Certainly, the frontier myth, embodied in Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier thesis of 1893 and a host of other texts before and after his work, has promoted the constancy and invariance of perspectives on Native presence or absence in the American West, and more specifically in the region's cities.[16] Reiterations of this myth have represented Western spaces as static and unchanging; as a consequence, the continuously changing relationship between Native Americans and various places in the American West during the twentieth century and beyond are obscured by an outdated national imaginary.[17] Deleuze and Guattari observe that "the creative potentialities of striated space" are not "easy to evaluate" due to the fixity of vision required of people who dutifully follow its rules and laws (494). For example, a university campus can operate as a striated space, a territory people view idealistically as a place for higher learning. A university campus is governed by liberal rules and regulations. Yet, it is also a privileged space that historically has not granted equal access to all populations. Failing to recognize the politics of inclusion and exclusion on their campuses, students, professors, and administrators may solidify existing structures of power, oftentimes through the exclusion of others on the basis of race. Of course, university campuses also provide avenues for the communal realization of "creative potentialities" through collective action and activism—the transformation of striated into smooth space (494). Alexie's novel presents the urban powwow as an exemplar of this potential

transformation of the U of W campus. For John, as I have noted, such a transformation is particularly difficult to register. Confused about his racial and cultural identity, John believes that to identify himself as a Native American he must root himself to a place in the past—a place that no longer exists and perhaps never existed at all—or else succumb to victimization in the imperialistic space of the present.

The transformation of striated into smooth space depends upon the process of deterritorialization, which Deleuze and Guattari introduce in relation to the rhizome, a symbol of open-ended and uncontained movement through space and time. In *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987), Deleuze and Guattari note that the rhizome is emblematic of the type of book they are trying to write: a book with "neither object nor subject" (3), "made of variously formed matters, and very different dates and speeds," and comprised of "lines of articulation or segmentarity, strata and territories" as well as "lines of flight, movements of deterritorialization and destratification" (3). Their book is an assemblage of metaphors—the rhizome, faciality, the refrain, nomadology—that eludes linear thought and easy explanation. The rhizome is a "subterranean stem" (6) that "assumes very diverse forms, from ramified surface extension in all directions to concretion into bulbs and tubers" (7) and can be "defined solely by a circulation of states" (21). Defined by uncontrolled circulation of states that are often subterranean, the rhizome has no "General" and no "organizing memory or central automaton" (21). Its lack of organization permits a process of deterritorialization, described as an "asignifying rupture" (9) that Deleuze and Guattari characterize through the relationship between an orchid and a wasp:

> The orchid deterritorializes by forming an image, a tracing of a wasp; but the wasp reterritorializes on that image. The wasp is nevertheless deterritorialized,

> becoming a piece in the orchid's reproductive apparatus. But it reterritorializes the orchid by transporting its pollen. Wasp and orchid, as heterogeneous elements, form a rhizome. (10)

The relationship between the orchid and the wasp in this figuration is clearly a complicated one. Neither the orchid nor the wasp maintains a separate territory outside of their relations with each other. The wasp and orchid continuously circulate through the processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, creating an endless loop wherein the orchid and wasp "form a rhizome" rather than forming their own respective territories (10).

In recent years, the rhizome has become a paradigmatic feature in western studies. By invoking the rhizome to characterize representations of the American West in film and literature, Neil Campbell's *Rhizomatic West* resists a tradition in western studies of interpreting the West and western texts according to a metanarrative that contains and limits the local or regional as "gridded space" (11). According to this tradition, a landscape, the West, produces cultural production (western texts) and identities (westerners). In other words, the West is a place of origin that determines all forms that spring from within the region. Deterritorialization and reterritorialization are not possible within this tradition because a western metanarrative assumes a coherent starting point, the immobile landscapes of the West, thus rooting territory and identity without recognizing their "lines of flight" (Deleuze and Guattari 9). Rather than duplicating this rooted tradition, Campbell chooses to "[shift] toward a postwestern perspective where the 'post' signifies the 'going beyond' and 'after' the established and 'taken for granted' notions of the West as a fixed and settled phenomenon" (25).[18]

This postwestern, rhizomatic perspective takes shape in Alexie's representation of

Marie Polatkin, who promotes the transformation and deterritorialization of the University of Washington campus by organizing an urban powwow. She organizes the powwow "as a protest against the University's refusal to allow a powwow" on campus (33). For Marie, the powwow is at once an assertion of Native presence in Seattle and at the U of W as well as a protest against racial ideologies and imperialistic practices that delimit Native Americans' participation in the production of place. Marie's relationship to powwows is quite different from, though equally complicated as, John Smith's. Alexie's narrator explains that "Marie has been organizing protests since her days on the Spokane Indian Reservation," where she was born and raised, but is unable to participate fully in "Spokane Indian culture" as a child due to her commitment to formal education (33). Unlike many of her reservation friends, Marie thrives in her public school education, but her success comes at a cost as she does not learn to "dance or sing traditionally" or "speak Spokane" and, as a result, is "often thought of as being less than Indian" on the reservation (33). With the help of her parents and the faculty of the tribal school, she finds "a way to escape the reservation" by earning a full scholarship to the University of Washington (34).

As a student at the U of W, she takes an active role in Native American culture and becomes intensely aware of the politics of Indian self-representation on campus. Her organization of and participation in the powwow contrasts with her experience in Dr. Clarence Mather's Introduction to Native American Literature course, where a white professor, who "supposedly loved Indians," assigns texts either written or edited by white men and women (58).[19] Marie continually challenges the professor's instructional practices and reaches an emotional boiling point when, a few weeks into the semester,

Mather aligns the actions of the Indian Killer, whom he labels a "revolutionary construct," with the historical resistance of Geronimo and the behavior of Native Americans in works of American literature (245). Mather's construction of the Indian Killer inspires her deconstructive interpretation of the label:

> I mean, calling him the Indian Killer doesn't make any sense, does it? If it was an Indian doing the killing, then wouldn't he be called the Killer Indian? I mean, Custer was an Indian killer, not a killer Indian. How about you, Doc, are you an Indian Killer? (247)

Refusing to allow Mather to shape the narrative at the university about Native Americans and Native American culture, Marie explains to him that she is, in fact, the revolutionary construct, a real live "twentieth-century Indian woman," a "twenty-first-century Indian" (247-48). While the classroom provides her with a place to brashly resist the perpetuation of a dominant narrative about Indians, the powwow provides her with a forum to collaborate with other Native Americans in the production of mobile Native identities.

The powwows afford Marie and other urban Indians the opportunity to "create their own urban tribe," a tribe neither defined at birth nor constructed from the outside by white Americans (38). She identifies herself as both Spokane and urban and uses this multiple identification to establish connections across tribes and nations:

> Marie was Spokane, would always be Spokane. But she was also an urban Indian, an amalgamation that included over two hundred tribes in the same Seattle area where many white people wanted to have Indian blood. (38)

This multiple identification assists Marie when she participates in urban powwows, which are organic Native American performances, not mere replications of rituals rooted to cultures situated outside of the city.

In *The Anguish of Snails: Native American Folklore in the West*, folklorist Barre

Toelken documents the phenomenon of the "contemporary intertribal powwow," explaining,

> Perhaps the powwow's very contemporaneity, its dynamism and rapid spread in recent years, and its participants' unhesitating use of modern designs and colors runs so contrary to white stereotypes and assumptions about the Vanishing American and are so opposed to the way non-Natives think about Indians ought to behave that some people see the powwow as a cheap mishmash of leftover ideas no longer taken seriously in the Native American world. (86)

On the website for the PBS program *Indian Country Diaries*, a two-part film on contemporary Native cultures in the United States, the anonymous authors surmise that the powwow culture of the twentieth-first century expresses multiple Native identities. In response to Toelken's claim that the powwow is "one of the most rapidly growing expressions of ethnic awareness and identity to be found in the world today" (Toelken 86), they ask the following questions:

> …what specific ethnicity is being expressed? Is the powwow an expression of identity for members of a particular tribe? Or, is it an expression of a new urban, "Pan-Indian" tribe that borrows bits and pieces of ceremonies, dances, and social customs from many tribal traditions? (*Indian Country Diaries* 1)

The program's online writers conclude that these are "open questions," implying that the powwow may express both particularity and pantribalism (1). In *Native Hubs*, Ramirez argues that transnationalism perhaps better characterizes the practices and strategies of urban Indians in the twenty-first century than "pantribalism" (13). While panstribalism bridges tribal differences in Natives' collective struggle for social change in the context of diaspora, transnationalism specifically connotes belonging and connection to multiple nations rather than the "displacement, loss, and deferred desire for homeland" implicit in diaspora discourse (14).[20] For the "many Native Americans living away from their tribal land bases as part of the Native American diaspora," the need to connect to multiple tribal

nations is particularly resonant because "living away from one's tribal nation often means not having sufficient access to one's tribal rights and resources" (14). Ultimately, Ramirez argues that the hub, produced at powwows, "emphasizes urban Indians' strong rooted connection to tribe and homeland" while also highlighting "the importance of the urban area, stressing the potential for political power as Native men and women organize across tribal lines" (14). The city, for transnational urban Indians in the United States, is not (or not only) a hegemonic space constructed by a dominant white culture, but rather a location that provides many Natives the chance to develop political power "by weaving networks of relationships across great distances" (2).

Committed to an engagement with Indian cultural circuits, which move from one city or town to the next, Alexie's character Marie partakes in the deterritorialization of the city of Seattle, transforming the university campus into a Native place. Rallied by the drumming and singing of Native people from various tribes, dancers gather on the campus' manicured lawn and mark the space with their animated motion. Standing beside John, Marie watches the place accrue Native meaning as a cartwheeling fancydancer moves across the grass:

> The fancydancer cartwheeled across the grass, his brightly colored feathers nearly shocking in their clarity. Reds and blues, yellows and greens. The crowd gasped at the cartwheels. The fancydancer was bold, original, dangerous. Many Indian elders would surely disapprove of the cartwheels. Many elders dismissed any kind of fancydancing. It was too modern, too white, the dance of children who refused to grow up.
>
> "Jeez" Marie said of the fancydancer. "He's good." (36)

Impressed by the colors of the fancydancer's costume and his spirited choreography, Marie does not judge the performance based upon its reproduction of, what Toelken critically calls, "older, 'purer' customs" (86). Though it does provoke her to remember

her past on the Spokane reservation, the performance is not for Marie an expression of ethnic particularity or a pure Native tradition. Marie embraces the dance's affective potential, its ability to attach her and other Native people to a place in Seattle where a community of urban Indians gathers to remember, celebrate, and perform their respective identities.

As a specific manifestation of a native hub, Ramirez suggests that the urban powwow helps "landless Native Americans maintain a sense of connection to their tribal homelands and urban spaces through participation in cultural circuits and maintenance of social networks" (3). The process of deterritorialization sounds in these hubs. Ramirez explains that high school gymnasiums—and, we might add, university campuses—provide gathering sites for Native Americans to assert their rights: "The sounds of the drum echoing past the confines of the high school gymnasium assert Indian peoples' right to have their culture inserted into urban community life" (80-81). According to this account, drums not only provoke embodied responses from Native listeners, stimulating them to dance, but also reconfigure space. "The dominant space of a school gymnasium" deterritorializes when it no longer functions as a striated, institutional space and instead transforms into "sacred territory" (81). The smoothing of striated space is not permanent, for when the powwow concludes, reterritorialization occurs and the place once again functions as a high school gymnasium. Yet, for the transnational Native Americans who participated in the powwow, as perhaps for non-Natives who observed the gym's transformation, the echoes of drums reverberate. The gym is not only a gym, not only a dominant space, but also a site of Native belonging, a temporary "social gathering site" where Native Americans creatively "reclaim territory in flexible and fluid ways" (96).

The Internalized Noise of Imperialism

Urban powwows provide twentieth- and twenty-first-century Native Americans with places to externalize their Native identities. Drumming, singing, and dancing are embodied acts in public forums that express the intense consciousness and feeling of Native peoples.[21] This continuous exchange between the internal and external in the medium of the powwow creates interactions that are, in the words Deleuze and Guattari use to describe animism, "a natural play of haecceities, degrees, intensities, events, and accidents that compose individuations totally different from those of the well-formed subjects that receive them" (253). Toelken suggests, "the powwow phenomenon can be viewed as a decodable kinetic statement about the realities of life for ethnically aware Native Americans, as well as a tableau of intense cultural meaning" (87). The external production of this ethnic awareness and cultural meaning through sound as well as movement, and its simultaneous internalization as intensities, is particularly resonant in *Indian Killer*, where readers encounter the destructive effects of John Smith's internalization of U.S. imperialist practices against Native Americans.

Whereas his counterpart, Marie, actively resists the displacement of Native Americans in the city of Seattle, asserting her own and her peers' agency and presence in the city, John is consumed by an anger that isolates him. Primarily, he is angry about the ways the city has been shaped by the forces of imperialism and globalization:

> He stared up at the last skyscraper in Seattle. It was small, even by Seattle standards, and pointless. Why were they finishing this tall building when most of the skyscrapers in downtown Seattle were already in financial trouble? So many vacant spaces, so many failed businesses. None of the buildings in downtown Seattle were owned by the people who had originally financed their construction. Nothing was original. (103)

The rapid exchange of commercial real estate in downtown Seattle suggests to John that

the city-space is constructed by corporate investors who have little stake (investment) in the relationships between people, culture, and place on the local scale. This capitalist system of ownership extends the imperialist practices of the United States government, which displaced Native peoples from their tribal lands throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a part of its national program of economic development and land expansion. The U.S. government, headquartered at a distance from Native territories, particularly those in the American West, forcefully removed Native Americans from their homelands, in the process expanding its economic resources and attempting to civilize the wilderness in the name of national progress. Upon using up these spaces' resources or discovering that the wild could not be tamed, financial investors in these now privatized spaces often left the lands it claimed emptied of people, cultures, and resources. Similarly, during the information age, when multi- or transnational corporations find more efficient or cheaper resources (namely human labor) outside of the United States—in India, China, or other developing countries—they leave "vacant spaces" and "failed businesses" in their wake (103).[22] Though John does not explicitly associate the construction of skyscrapers with the construction of empire, he certainly suspects that the corporations that finance such construction are complicit in a process that prioritizes financial opportunity over the lives and cultures it may come at the cost of. This suspicion is palpable when, near the conclusion of the novel, he observes, "every building in Seattle contained the bones of fallen workers. Every building was a tomb" (405). As a construction worker at the last skyscraper, John is constructing his own "tomb," for he ultimately leaps from the fortieth floor of the building to his death (405).

His eventual entombment in the structure somewhat hyperbolically concludes John's internalization of globalized capitalism and its unaccommodating organization of space. During his fall, John "finally and completely understood the voices in his head" (412). The narrator does not elaborate on John's understanding, but based on the mounting evidence Alexie presents, it is apparent that John understands that Seattle, for him, can only be a grave. Leading up to his suicide, he attributes his sense of displacement in the city to Euro-American civilization and the practices of colonization and development that it has used to sculpt Seattle. His anger over this displacement manifests as "noises in his head" (39) that haunt him as he occupies urban space and become clear to John only as he falls to his death.

In the opening chapter of the novel, we see that John attributes these noises to an imagined birth trauma, during which he was removed from his Indian mother and adopted into white culture. In that scene, the noise of the helicopter, a military transport piloted by "a man in a white jumpsuit," drowns out John's cries. As an adult, "now twenty-seven years old…six-feet tall and heavily muscled," John revises his account of the noise's origination, remembering "when it first happened, this noise in his head":

> He was young, maybe ten years old, when he heard strange music. It happened as he ran from school, across the parking lot, toward the car where Olivia [his adoptive mother] waited for him. He knew this music was written especially for him: violins, bass guitar, piano, harmonica, drums. Now, as he sat on the fortieth floor and listened to those voices, John felt a sharp pain in his lower back. His belly burned. (23)

According to this memory, John's nightmarish transport by helicopter is not the original sounding of the noise. During his coffee break at the construction site, he remembers a moment at school when the music started. Noise is instrumental music in this memory, a somewhat distinctly non-Native American ensemble of instruments playing "especially

for him" (23). John's perception of the music occurs as he leaves the institutional space of St. Francis Catholic School, where he is "the only Indian" student (17). His conflicted feelings about the almost all-white school he attended resonate in the space John occupies in the present, Seattle, "a city dominated by young white men with tiny ponytails" (23). In the moment of remembering, as he sits atop the skyscraper, the noise in his head is far more jarring than the music he heard as a child:

> He cupped his hand to his ear. He knew he was alone on this floor, but the voices were clear and precise…Sometimes there were sudden sirens and explosions, or the rumble of a large crowd in an empty room. (23)

This intense noise creates "pain in his lower back" and burns his belly; what is essentially a state of consciousness and feeling creates unpleasant physical sensations (23). A feeling moves to the surface of his body and to his organs, intensifying John's sense of self as a site of noise and pain. During moments when he hears such noise, John imagines himself isolated in "an empty room," occupied only by noise that resonates through his pained body and mind (23).

David Rice draws similar conclusions about Tayo's experience with a "cacophony of foreign and familiar voices and jukebox music in his dreams" in Silko's *Ceremony* (Rice 118). He observes, "Tayo cannot locate his identity out of the cacophony of his life any more than he can pick out and hold on to a stable voice inside his head" (118). The sounding of this cacophony "inside" Tayo's head marks his internalization of "Euramerican destructiveness" and "the destructive forces of urbanization and industrialization," which disconnect him from Native culture (115). Cities are instrumental to Tayo's sense of displacement as, for instance, in Los Angeles,

> The noise of the war [World War II] and the city and the collection of voices from Tayo's past mark his experience of the city (and the non-reservation world in

> general) as one of verbal and sonic confusion; he is so bombarded by his environment that he hasn't the consciousness to recognize his own existence within it…To participate in a structured narrative of self and community, Tayo has to overcome the inchoate roar placed in his head by his experiences during his time off-reservation. (121)

Silko's novel does not entirely resolve Tayo's confusion. Yet, in its representation of the healing ceremony conducted by Betonie in the city of Gallup, New Mexico, *Ceremony* shows the alternative narratives about self and community available to Tayo when he participates in ceremony. As with Alexie's representation of the urban powwow as a mobile and continuously transforming cultural practice, Betonie's ceremony is "incongruous" with "older notions" of Indian traditions (126). Rice suggests, correctly to my mind, that Betonie "stands as an example of the evolution and survival of Indian tradition" (126) or as Dennis Cutchins observes, Tayo's healer is an embodiment of a Nativism that "embraces change" and "is the self-conscious creation of a new culture using selected cultural elements symbolically" (Cutchins 82).[23] These observations on Silko's representation of mobile Native American cultural practices and traditions in the late twentieth century suggest that such ceremonies can function as countermeasures to the noise Tayo and John Smith internalize.

I find it too easy to read Alexie's *Indian Killer* as a tragic tale about "pathology…caused by territorial displacement" (Ramirez 180).[24] By focusing on the novel's representation of a native hub in Seattle, I ultimately conclude that the author represents the city as a place of often-unfulfilled potential, rather than as a space of inevitable containment and domination. Transnational Indians like Marie repeatedly transform an urban space into a Native place, participating in the sensuous production of place at urban powwows. The great tragedy of the novel is that, more often than not,

John cannot hear the drumbeats over the noise in his head. That tragedy points to the powerful resonance of imperialism and globalization, processes that shape the trajectories Native people take through their lives in the city.

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[1] Alexie, Sherman. *Indian Killer*. New York: Atlantic Monthly, 1996. 3.

[2] Ramirez, Renya K. *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and Beyond*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007. 69.

[3] *Sound Clash* is a special issue of *American Quarterly*, published in September 2011, which focuses on recent sound-based approaches in the field of American studies. Keeling and Kun note that, in this special issue, we see a "conversation" between the volume's essayists and "the flurry of new scholarly books that have appeared over the past decade" that analyze sound "in a variety of social, political, and artistic settings" (450). A number of these books—Sterne's *The Audible Past*, Bijsterveld's *Mechanical Sound*, Labelle's *Acoustic Territories*, and Kahn's *Noise Water Meat*—influence the analysis in this dissertation.

[4] In *The Audible Past*, Sterne refers to the period between 1750 and 1925 as an age of "Ensonicment" that rivals the more familiar Age of Enlightenment in the terms of the new intellectual and scientific discoveries it engenders. Veit Erlmann makes similar and equally engaging historical observations in *Reason and Resonance*.

[5] I claim that Alexie's novel "examines" mysteries. My wording here reflects Meredith James' suggestion that booksellers' and critics' classification of *Indian Killer* as a detective novel or suspense thriller "are too simplistic" (171). Conventional mystery novels conclude with mysteries solved, whereas Alexie explicitly refuses to reveal the identity of the Indian Killer—or, for that matter, to solve the novel's implicit mysteries. James notes, "Alexie's novel does not set out to pose and solve a mystery, at least not in the conventional manner of detective novels" (171). My evaluation of the novel's mysteries similarly suggests that *Indian Killer* does not solve a mystery but instead uses mystery to demonstrate the unresolved (but navigable) tensions of a particular Western place.

[6] In particular, Creswell cites political geographer John Agnew's "three fundamental aspects of place: "1. Location. 2. Locale 3. Sense of Place" (7). Location, as I note in the chapter, is self-explanatory, referring to objective geographical coordinates. Creswell notes that, by locale, "Agnew means the material setting for the social relations—the actual shape of place within which people conduct their lives as individuals, as men or women, as white or black, straight or gay" (7). In *Indian Killer*, though the city's skyline may suggest a "locale" because it is one of the predominant forms that "shapes" the material setting, we see that John Smith views the skyscrapers as antagonistic toward "social relations" in Seattle (7). Many of its skyscrapers are now "vacant spaces" because computers have made office places in high-rent high rises an unnecessary expense for multi- and transnational corporations (Alexie 103). Finally, according to Creswell, "by 'sense of place' Agnew means the subjective and emotional attachment people have to place" (Creswell 7). As I suggest in two separate sections of this chapter, John appears to lack a sense of place in Seattle, or his sense of place is degenerative. Anger consumes him, and he retreats into himself rather than trying to interact with his environment in different ways. In contrast, Marie Polatkin is emotionally attached to both the city and the Spokane Indian reservation lands, and her sense of place is largely attributable to her engagement in, what Ramirez calls, native hubs. For more on the "three fundamental aspects of place" (7), see Agnew, John. *The United States in the World Economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

[7] DeCerteau notes that, while many walkers "follow the thicks and thins of an urban 'text' they write without being able to read" (93), others make tactical "choices among the signifiers of the spatial 'language'" or displace "them through the use [they make] of them" (98-99).

[8] In "Adoption Narratives, Trauma, and Origins," Margaret Homas reviews several literary works, including *Indian Killer*, that address transnational or transracial adoption. She suggests that "the extra difficulty of lack of information about birth parents, date, place, and as the oxymoronic current language has it, birth culture" often make it difficult for minority children adopted by white parents in the U.S. to

reconstruct narratives about their origins (4). Homas argues that transnational or transracial adoption presents "in a particularly acute form the problem of the unknowability of origins and the common tendency to address that problem with fiction making" (5). Nancy Van Styvendale's essay "The Trans/Historicity of Trauma in Jeanette Armstrong's *Slash* and Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer*" also addresses the issue of John's adoption, with specific attention to the cultural trauma caused by the loose adoption policies that preceded the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978. Prior to this legislation, Indian children were commonly adopted out of Native American families and into white families without significant regulation or consideration by federal, state, local, or tribal authorities. For more on the role of adoption practices in *Indian Killer*, see Meredith James' essay "'Indians Do Not Live in Cities, They Only Reside There': Captivity and the Urban Wilderness in *Indian Killer*."

[9] My analysis of Alexie's representation of Seattle contrasts with the argument of William Bevis in "Native American Novels: Homing In." Bevis examines fiction by M. Scott Momaday, Leslie Marmon Silko, James Welch, and D'Arcy McNickle, arguing that their contemporary Native American novels stress "coming home, staying put, contracting, even what we call 'regressing' to a place, a past where one has been before" as "not only the primary story" but also "a primary mode of knowledge and a primary good" (582). In many ways, Ramirez's endorsement of native hubs appears to be a response to Bevis' account of the vested interest of Native American cultural production in rooted notions of home.

[10] Specifically, while attending to the fancydancing that occurs at the powwow on the University of Washington campus, Alexie's narrator observes: "Many elders would surely disapprove of the cartwheels. Many elders dismissed any kind of fancydancing. It was too modern, too white, the dance of children who refused to grow up" (36). The younger participants in the powwow, in comparison, "gasp" at the cartwheels performed by a fancydancer, dressed in "brightly colored feathers" that are "nearly shocking in clarity" (36). The changes to ritual serve to stimulate a different generation of powwow participants.

[11] Thrush carefully examines "the idea that Indians and cities are mutually exclusive" (xiv) and notes, "Even in *Indian Killer*, otherwise a powerful meditation on what it means to be both modern and Indian, cities are somehow places where Native people cannot belong except as half-fulfilled people or as ciphers for nature" (9). Though this cursory assessment of Alexie's novel bears out in the character of John Smith, Marie Polatkin, as my reading suggests, troubles Thrush's observation that Alexie only represents Natives as "half-fulfilled people" or "ciphers of nature" in the city of Seattle.

[12] In *Reason and Resonance: A History of Modern Aurality*, Veit Erlmann notes, "I see reason's autocratic status as the center of all modern virtues as constantly being threatened with implosion" (15). Erlmann proposes that reason exists in a dialectical relationship with resonance, in which the latter continuously dislodges the centrality of the former. He differentiates between reason and resonance as follows: "While reason implies the disjunction of subject and object, resonance involves their conjunction. Where reason requires separation and autonomy, resonance entails adjacency, sympathy, and the collapse of the boundary between perceiver and perceived" (10). Resonance involves an engagement with affective relations, which influence the rational mind's autonomy. Not only does resonance occasionally dislodge the centrality of reason, but it also transforms subjects' use of reason. Erlmann observes that reason and resonance "developed in contiguity, along strikingly parallel and hitherto largely unrecognized trajectories, and…these corresponding histories of reason and resonance are both a key element of modern cultural practice and at the heart of modern aurality" (11). I review these distinctions here because Ramirez's interest in affect at hubs suggests the possible incorporation of feeling into Native people's reasoned efforts within citizenship debates.

[13] Borrowing from Laverne Roberts, a Paiute Indian and founder of the American Indian Alliance, Ramirez claims that the hub is a "Native woman's vision of urban and rural mobility, her suggestion of a mechanism of cultural and identity transmission, as well as social change" (24). In her ethnographic study of hub-making in the "Silicon Valley and Beyond," she privileges "Native women, in particular—as well as Native men and youth as social analysts—who challenge academic discourses, popular culture, patriarchy, colonization, and government policy that have acted to disenfranchise them as members of distinct cultural, social, and political entities" (24).

[14] In his analysis of the powwow in contemporary Native American culture, folklorist Barre Toelken observes that drums "are thought by many tribes to be alive" (92). As he describes the powwow, drums stand in for the Natives playing the drums. For instance, he writes, "Each drum (the term includes the drum and the group of singers gathered around it) alternates with the others in singing, although a particular drum may be asked to perform out of sequence for an honor dance" (90). In this description, drums sing

and are "asked to perform," and the drum, an object, takes on the agency of the person using the instrument (90). Drums are "invited" to the powwow, and "other drums…show up unannounced" (90).

[15] Alexie's emphasis on motion and mobility in this urban space is reflective of much of his fiction set in Seattle. In "'A Limited Range of Motion': Multiculturalism, 'Human Questions,' and Urban Indian Identity in Sherman Alexie's *Ten Little Indians*," Jennifer Ladino observes, "Alexie's Seattle, with its incessant motion, fleeting interactions, and excessive individualism, can be alienating and cold; it can render its inhabitants invisible or subject them to merciless stereotypes. More often, though, the city is a space in which empathetic boundary crossing and community building take place" (38).

[16] See Frederick Jackson Turner's *The Frontier in American History*, in which he claims, "the frontier is the outer edge of the wave—the meeting point between savagery and civilization" (3). The American frontier, for Turner, "lies at the hither edge of free land," which as of the 1890 Census Report has all but disappeared in the West. Free land is land that has not yet been occupied by Euro-American civilization and retains the characteristics of wilderness. The wilderness "strips off the garments of civilization" and "arrays" Americans "in the hunting shirt and the moccasin"; it "puts [Americans] in the log cabin of the Cherokee and Iroquois and runs an Indian palisade around him" so that "before long he has gone to planting corn and plowing with a sharp stick; he shouts the war cry and takes the scalp in orthodox Indian fashion" (4). In short for Turner, wilderness and Indians are inseparable in the space that he calls the American frontier.

[17] Patricia Nelson Limerick remarks that "Turner's frontier was a process, not a place. When 'civilization' had conquered 'savagery' at any one location, the process—and the historian's attention—moved on. In rethinking Western history, we gain the freedom to think of the West as a place—as many complicated environments occupied by natives who considered their homelands to be the center, not the edge" (26).

[18] For a more detailed account of the postwestern perspective, see Kollin, Susan. ""Postwestern Studies: Dead or Alive." *Postwestern Cultures: Literature, Theory Space*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2007; and Comer, Krista. "Introduction: Assessing the Postwestern." WAL 48.1-2 (Summer 2013): 3-15.

[19] Mather's reading list includes *The Education of Little Tree*, *Black Elk Speaks*, *Lame Deer: Seeker of Visions*, and *Lakota Woman*. Marie observes that the first book was written by Forrest Carter, a Grand Wizard of the KKK, and the other three "were taught in almost every Native American Literature class in the country, and purported to be autobiographical, though all three were co-written by white men" (58). Mather also assigns "three anthologies of traditional Indian stories edited by white men, two nonfiction studies of Indian spirituality written by white women, a book of traditional Indian poetry translations edited by a Polish-American Jewish man, and an Indian murder mystery written by some local white writer named Jack Wilson, who claimed he was a Shilshomish Indian" (58-59). Wilson is a significant character in Alexie's novel. At the conclusion of *Indian Killer*, John Smith abducts Wilson, takes him to the fortieth floor of the last skyscraper in Seattle, and slashes his face with a knife, suggesting that John may have been the Indian Killer all along. Following this act of violence against Wilson, a white writer who attempts to represent Native culture and identity, John leaps from the building to his death. As I explain in the final section of this chapter, while John is falling, he claims to understand at last the noises in his head.

[20] According to Ramirez, "the hub emphasizes the importance of Indians' relationship to both homeland and diaspora, thereby supporting a consciousness that crosses large expanses of geographical terrain, which can bridge not only tribal but also national-state boundaries. In fact, the hub's emphasis on the tribal homeland demonstrates its Native specificity" (11-12).

[21] In this chapter, I examine the urban powwow as a live performance of sound. Yet, as Christopher Scales observes in "The North American Aboriginal Recording Industry," powwows have become "increasingly mediated through technologies of print, audio, and video recording" (88). Scales examines several record labels that, since the 1990s, have recorded powwows for distribution and explains that the "industry is small and bounded, and the vast majority of the record-buying public is Native; most powwow recordings are sold on the powwow trail…through traveling vendors, and are rarely found in large national or international music retail chains" (89). The mediation of the powwow raises some interesting questions, which I do not pursue here, about these recordings' production of Native places.

[22] Near the end of the novel, in a conversation with Jack Wilson, John's mother Olivia remarks, "When we think of cities, don't we think of tall buildings? Now we have all these computers and things. People can work from anywhere. They don't need to be bunched up in the same big buildings anymore. They don't even need to be in the same country to work together anymore. Things change, don't they?" (355)

[23] Rice uses the same quotations from Cutchins' essay "So That the Nations May Become Genuine Indian."
[24] In her brief assessment of Alexie's *Indian Killer*, Ramirez observes that "Alexie's representation of Smith is consistent with broader academic and media representations of pathology that are caused by territorial displacement" (180). I find it interesting that she overlooks the character of Marie in her treatment of Alexie's work, for Marie, like the young Indian women Ramirez interviews, "[asserts her] sense of a collective tribal identity while living away from [her] land [base]" (180-81). That is, Alexie's novel represents Marie as a transnational Indian rather than obscuring the existence of such identities.

CHAPTER 3

"A KNOWING THAT WAS ELECTRIC IN THE AIR": THE WOLF'S HOWL IN MCCARTHY'S *THE CROSSING*

He heard no wolves.
~Cormac McCarthy, *The Crossing*[1]

Only the mountain has lived long enough to listen objectively to the howl of a wolf.
~Aldo Leopold, "Thinking Like a Mountain"[2]

The howl of a wolf is one of the most forceful and misunderstood sounds produced in the North American wilderness. In *Of Wolves and Men*, Barry Lopez writes, "There has been more speculation about the nature and function of the wolf's howl than the music, probably, of any other animal" (38). By referring to animal vocalizations as "music," he anthropomorphizes the sounding of the animal other. Music is an auditory system of signs that communicates meaning in variably organized ways, engendering affective responses from listeners, as we have seen in Alexie's novel, which are often unpredictable. Lopez's formalization of the wolf's howl as music advances his efforts to make rational and emotional sense of "a rich captivating sound, a seductive echo that can moan eerily and raise the hair on your head" (38). Though the "nature and function" of

the wolf's howl provoke uncertainty and speculation—as music often does— Lopez ably sketches its acoustic characteristics:

> It typically consists of a single note, rising sharply at the beginning or breaking abruptly at the end as the animal strains for volume. It can contain as many as twelve related harmonics. When wolves howl together they harmonize, rather than chorus on the same note, creating an impression of more animals howling than there actually are. (38)

In this assessment of the howl's volume and harmonics, the sound dupes human listeners, leading them to attribute it to an exaggerated number of wolves. Even the measurable auditory components of the howl tend to mystify human ears.

For wolves, howling serves various purposes, some recognized by human listeners and others mysterious, beyond our comprehension, and thus capable of provoking the speculation and exaggeration that Lopez notes. Based on his research into the functions of wolf vocalizations, Lopez observes, "Wolves apparently howl to assemble the pack, especially before and after the hunt; to pass on an alarm, especially at the den site; to locate each other in a storm or unfamiliar territory; and to communicate across great distance" (38).[3] As the verbs "assemble" and "locate" and the nouns "territory" and "distance" suggest, howls communicate spatial orientation—I killed a deer, let's meet and eat in the meadow; there is danger at the den, return immediately. Like scent marking, they help wolves mark significant places through embodied announcements.[4] That is, through the use of their bodies (their lungs, throats, urinary tracts, etc.), wolves announce where they have been, where they are, and where they are going. These observations on howling, grounded in scientific observation, have not stopped human cultures from attributing metaphorical tenors to wolf howls.[5] In the Western United States, a central but contested habitat for North American wolf species,

over time, various cultures have assigned provisional meanings to wolf howls that reflect human desires and fears.

In this chapter, I analyze the provisional meanings attached to wolf howls—and more generally, wolves—by an occupant of the mid-twentieth-century U.S.-Mexican borderlands in Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Crossing*. Billy Parham, the protagonist, is a white, teenaged boy, who lives and works on his family's ranch in Hidalgo County, New Mexico during the years leading up to the entrance of the United States into World War II. The novel's first major plot point occurs when Billy's father tasks him with the pursuit and capture of a Mexican wolf that has been killing cattle on and around the family's property. Leading up to Billy's pursuit and capture of the wolf, the third-person narrator attends only briefly to the effect of wolf howls on him. Yet, the descriptions of howls initiate the novel's moving meditation—*The Crossing* is both emotionally moving and driven by the protagonist's motion through the landscape—on the importance of wolves to Billy's sense of place in the borderlands. For him, the howls signal the ecological wildness of the region, which he understands as a place-based virtue. When they fade following the killing of a single wolf, Billy responds nostalgically and is unable to revise his relationship to the U.S.-Mexican borderlands or its human and animal inhabitants. The silence of wolves and Billy's response to it, both conveying his nostalgia, are as central to the novel's production of an affective borderlands geography as its explicit attention to the sound of wolves. I argue that this literary sound, McCarthy's varied representation of howling (and silent) wolves, creates a chain of signifiers, the howls signifying wolves and wolves signifying the ultimately more-than ecological wildness of the borderlands. Billy's understanding of the region as wild relies

upon his internalization of a particular place-based narrative about wolves and wilderness that is not consistent across cultures or even within a single culture. Intruding upon Billy's understanding of the region as wild are the harsh realities that Billy experiences as he travels from the United States into Mexico and, much to his dismay, learns that the brutality of people in the borderlands often exceeds the noble wildness that he associates with howling wolves.

Wolves have historically been an overdetermined signifier—specifically in the United States—due to the legacy of werewolf tales from Europe, the association of wolves with an uncivilized wilderness and savage Indians that white Euro-Americans attempted to colonize, and the ongoing conflict between ranchers and environmentalists over the right of wolves to occupy various lands in the American West. Before I begin my analysis of McCarthy's representation of wolves in *The Crossing*, I review written works that examine the history and mythology surrounding the wolf in the United States. This cursory review begins with James Burbank's account of Mexican wolves, for his work situates us within the U.S.-Mexican borderlands, the region of interest in McCarthy's novel. Over the course of the chapter, I address works of American literature that represent wolves and their howls, locating McCarthy's characterization of wolves within an ecological literary discourse that holds up the species as a symbol of redemptive wildness.

Notably, all of these works are written by white, male authors, a fact that should not be taken lightly as we consider the howling of wolves in McCarthy's borderlands soundscape. Unlike Jack London, well known for writing about wolves in the early 1900s, or Rick Bass and Barry Lopez, contemporary nonfiction writers, McCarthy

appears to recognize attempts to redeem (if not glorify) wolves as guided by a nostalgic and romantic sentiment. Billy Parham protects his vision of an ecologically wild U.S.-Mexican borderlands, where wolves should be respected and preserved. However, even as he makes accommodations for wolves, an animal other violently mistreated and displaced throughout westward expansion in the United States, he does not consider his complicated relationship, as a white American, to other colonized groups in the borderlands—namely Mexicans and Mexican-Americans. His nostalgia, a longing for an ecologically wild place unaffected by industrialism or globalization, blinds him to his participation in the production of an abstract, mythic space, in which colonized people and animals are not free to produce dynamic places of their own making.

In the literary discourse on wolves, American writers represent them as noble, even magisterial, creatures cloaked in mystery. Much of the mystery surrounding wolves revolves around their apparent knowledge of wild places and their ability to survive in the harshest of conditions. As the title of this chapter hints, McCarthy represents the knowledge of wolves as "electric," alive with possibility that is both dangerous and alluring to Parham (4). Billy attempts to emulate this knowledge, to surpass it so as to apply the "knowing" of wolves in wild places on both sides of the U.S.-Mexican border (4). However, his attempts to understand, occupy, and traverse place as if he possessed the wolf's knowing leads to his disorientation in the borderlands and also effects, what Henri Lefebvre calls, the abstraction of space.

The Discursive Construction of Howling Wolves

In *Vanishing Lobo*, a history of the Mexican wolf's elimination from Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and the highlands of northern Mexico, James Burbank notes that wolf howls "stir the human blood like few animal vocalizations" and have an "eery and blood-curdling effect on humans" (123). He associates this effect—represented as a coursing, liquid internalization of an externally produced sound—with historical changes to humans' relationship with a powerful predator. As does Lopez, Burbank differentiates between indigenous cultures' reverence for wolves and nineteenth- and twentieth-century European Americans' fear of the canis lupus. In generations past, many indigenous North American cultures—the Navajo of the Southwest and the Nunamiut of Alaska, for example—identified wolves as exemplary hunters that provided inspiration within societies dependent on hunting for survival. As European-American settlers migrated west and the agricultural economy expanded during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, often violently displacing indigenous cultures, the wolf was viewed as a threat to the ranching industry, a deterrent to economic and social progress. Under the guise of predator control, cattlemen and hunters killed wolves during the late nineteenth century "with almost pathological dedication," as Lopez puts it (139). Justified by an economic rationale—wolves cost ranchers money because they kill cattle and sheep—the methodical killing of wolves continued at an astonishing rate throughout much of the twentieth century. By the 1980s, the Mexican wolf, one among thirty-nine subspecies of the canis lupus, was driven to the point of extinction, most of its survivors held in captivity.

The systematic eradication of wolves in the western United States was attended

by an irrational fear of and a hatred for the animal, a "type of fear" that Lopez calls theriophobia: "Fear of the beast. Fear of the beast as an irrational, violent, insatiable creature. Fear of the projected beast in oneself" (140). Lopez claims that "at the heart of theriophobia is the fear of one's own nature," and argues that humans kill wolves and other predators in response to "self-hatred" and "anxiety over the human loss of inhibitions that are common to other animals who do not rape, murder, and pillage" (140). For Lopez, then, humans recognize the frequent barbarity of their own behavior, but rather than face their violent tendencies, they project the aptitude for irrational violence "onto a single animal," which "becomes a scapegoat" and "is annihilated" (140). Howls and their blood-curdling effect on human listeners, I would argue, provoke people to encounter this fear—a fear of a particular kind of wildness, an uncomplicated savagery, that they occasionally project onto wolves, or people from other cultures, in order to ignore their own capacity for blood-letting.[6] The violence of humans is apparent, ironically and obviously, in the savage practices that they have employed to exterminate wolves as well as in the acts of violence they repeatedly commit against each other.[7]

Near the conclusion of his book, Lopez notes the relative absence of contemporary literature, art, and folklore that represent wolves as "benevolent" creatures. Jack London, of course, provides one notable and well-known exception, but his work represents sympathetic feelings about wolves that are now more than a century old.[8] According to Lopez, London's novels—namely *The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang*—demonstrated "a preoccupation with 'the brute nature' in man, which he symbolized in the wolf" (269). Both "man" and wolf have a "brute nature" in London's writing, yet he represents the violence of wolves as connected to an energy that man's "blood lust" and

"joy to kill" is not (London 49). In *The Call of the Wild*, for example, as the hybrid wolf Buck pursues a snowshoe rabbit near the mouth of the Tahkeena River in the Yukon, the narrator observes, "All of that stirring of old instincts which at stated periods drives men out from the sounding cities to the forest and plain to kill things by chemically propelled leaden pellets, the blood lust, the joy to kill—all this was Buck's, only it was infinitely more" (49). London celebrates the "stirring of old instincts," while also distinguishing this human sensation from the "lust" and "joy" that, for Buck, is "infinitely more intimate" (49). As London continues to characterize Buck's excitement at the chase, the distinction between human and animal sensation begins to blur; the difference is apparently, for London, one of degree.

Buck's thrill of pursuit is "more intimate" because he does not consciously interpret it—instead allowing a feeling to surge and, more importantly for my purposes, sound through him:

> There is an ecstasy that marks the summit of life, and beyond which life cannot rise. And such is the paradox of living, this ecstasy comes as a complete forgetfulness that one is alive. This ecstasy, this forgetfulness of living, comes to the artist, caught up and out of himself in a sheet of flame; it comes to the soldier, war-mad on a stricken field and refusing quarter; and it came to Buck, leading the pack, sounding the old wolf-cry, straining after the food that was alive and fled swiftly before him through the moonlight. He was sounding the deeps of his nature, and of the parts of his nature that were deeper than he, going back into the womb of time. (49-50)

According to London's narrator, humans experience this "ecstasy" and "forgetfulness of living" when they are lifted "up" and "out" of themselves by extraordinary circumstances (49). This account suggests that, when experienced by humans, ecstasy is a disembodying experience that helps artists and soldiers accomplish feats and states of consciousness exceeding our expectations of human capability. In comparison, during

the hunt, a rather mundane if not at least everyday experience for predatory animals, wolves embody ecstasy. The narrator notes that Buck is "mastered by the sheer surging of life, the tidal wave of being, the perfect joy of each separate muscle, joint, and sinew," which expresses "itself in movement" (50). The "surging of life" through the wolf produces an excess energy that overflows and manifests in the "sounding" that Buck makes (50). It is precisely this kind of excess feeling, projected onto Buck in London's anthropomorphic narration, that Billy suspects in the howls of wolves in *The Crossing*. Moreover, like London's narrator, he imagines that he can summon this affective excess to respond to the unique demands of a harsh environment, a western wild.

Lopez suggests that accounts of benevolent wolves—such as those we encounter in London, as later in McCarthy—might indicate that "we are looking for a new wolf…to know how wrong our ideas about wolves have been, how complex the creature really is, how ultimately unfathomable" (249). Following the publication of *Of Wolves in Men* in 1978, a few rich and compelling literary works, particularly in Western American literature, have featured representations of wolves that emphasize their boundless, immeasurable potential.[9] In its search for "a new wolf," contemporary literature from the American West represents the wolf not only as a symbol of fear, mankind's fear of the beast, but also of the loss of and longing for a place, time, and feeling that appear no longer to exist.

The howling of wolves in some recent literature, and most notably in *The Crossing*, produces a textual variety of anamnesis, a "sonic effect" that Jean-Francois Augoyard characterizes as an "effect of reminiscence, in which a past situation or atmosphere is brought back to the listener's consciousness, provoked by a particular

signal or sonic context" (21).[10] Augoyard explains that anamnesis "refers to situations in which a sound or sonic context revives a situation or an atmosphere of the past," and "the more distant and unexpected the reference, the more the emotion may overwhelm the listener" (21). By reviving an atmosphere of the past, anamnesis facilitates nostalgia, a potentially overwhelming longing of people for a place and feeling situated in the past. Nostalgia disorients listeners, as their feelings for places in the past color and distort their experiences with and interpretations of the sounds of the present. Anamnesis is a sonic effect that locates listeners in an abstract space, somewhere in between a place in the past and their location in the present.

I borrow the term "abstract space" from Henri Lefebvre, who articulates the advantages as well as the drawbacks of "the yawning gap that separates…linguistic mental space from…social space wherein language becomes practice" (5). For Lefebvre, the "gap" between mental and social space is a yawn, a sound of varying volume that often indicates a person or people's exhaustion. People are exhausted—mentally, emotionally, and physically—by abstract space because in it, "We are…confronted by an indefinite multitude of spaces, each one piled upon, or perhaps contained within, the next: geographical, economic, demographic, sociological, ecological, political, commercial, national, continental, global" (8). Lefebvre suggests that, more often than not, the state and its financial institutions—and I might add, imperialism—produce this multitude of spaces, employing and sometimes manipulating discourse to shape the practices and social relations of people within place and space.[11] These political and economic forces, and the discourses they use, impact people's phenomenological experiences within local places. For example, when human listeners hear a wolf howl, they not only perceive the

harmonics of the sound in a local place but also associate the howl with geographical, economic, political, and other discourses that they assimilate. In a pessimistic view, enmeshed within a multitude of discourses, listeners are not hearing the wolf's howl—a sound that attaches them to a local or regional place. Rather, they are absorbing the various discourses that have constructed the howl. In his assessment of abstract space, however, Lefebvre permits encounters with place-bound phenomena that are not so utterly cynical. Abstract space "transports and maintains specific social relations, dissolves others, and stands opposed to yet others" (50) while also carrying "within itself the seeds of a new kind of space" that "accentuates differences" (51). As I now proceed to my analysis of *The Crossing*, I highlight the extent to which howling wolves figure into an exhausted, yawning narrative about the ecological wildness of a particular place in the American West while also representing "the seeds of a new kind of space," in which Billy Parham is forced to recognize the residual effects of U.S. imperialism in the borderlands (51).

The Crossing draws attention to the howling of wolves in order to represent Billy Parham's experience in and understanding of the U.S.-Mexican borderlands of the mid-twentieth-century, a place where and time when wolves were still vanishing from the Southwest and different forms of wildness were replacing them. The first part of McCarthy's novel centers on Parham's attempts to return a captured Mexican wolf to her home in the mountains of northern Mexico. En route from his family's ranch in New Mexico to the U.S.-Mexican border, he lodges with a pair of ranchers, the elder of whom tells Billy of his memory of howling wolves:

> When we used to bring cattle up the valley from down around Ciénega Springs why first night we'd generally hit in about Government Draw and make camp

> there. And you could hear em all across the valley. Them first warm nights. You'd nearly always hear em in that part of the valley. I aint heard one in years. (60)

Parham's sentimental interest in a place in the past, where "you could hear em all across the valley," leads him to unwittingly produce an abstract space in which wolves, in various guises, are always at the door (60).[12] McCarthy's account of wolves—in particular of a Mexican she-wolf that travels across the U.S.-Mexican border in search of food—does not necessarily present, as Lopez would have it, a "new wolf," one (or several?) that is benevolent or good natured (Lopez 249).[13] It does, however, extol wolves' wildness, which, cast alongside Parham's obvious discomfort with and participation in human wildness in the borderlands, is an equivocal virtue that humans struggle to attain.

Because the howling of wolves only resonates in the first part of the novel, and briefly in its second part, readers may easily overlook its significance to the story's succeeding representations of a distinctly western place. Despite the material absence of wolves in parts II through IV, howling sounds in modified form whenever the narrator points to Parham's misrecognition of the place he occupies. The howling of wolves, so easily misinterpreted as Lopez has suggested, activates a refrain, a recurring set of territorial motifs that represent McCarthy's characters' static, unmoving spatial awareness. A refrain, according to Delueze and Guattari, is "a territorial assemblage" that repeats without appearing to repeat (312). They characterize the refrain "in the general sense" as "any aggregate of matters of expression that draws a territory and develops into territorial motifs and landscapes (there are optical, gestural, motor, etc., refrains)" (323). Though the refrain, at least "in the narrow sense," is "sonorous or

'dominated' by sound," it transposes into territorial motifs that are not explicitly concerned with sound. In McCarthy's novel, such transformational repetition is evident when the howling of wolves metamorphoses into other territorial markers, such as the liminal spaces of the U.S.-Mexican borderlands, which locate Parham within a global as well as local and regional place.

Electric Wolf-Land

The Crossing, the second installation in McCarthy's *Border Trilogy*, foregrounds sixteen year-old Billy Parham's sentimental relationship to the geographical West of the mid-twentieth century with understated attention to the howling of wolves. The novel begins as the Parham family moves to the "newly formed county they'd named Hidalgo" in southern New Mexico nearly a decade before the start of World War II (3). The third-person narrator describes the "new country" as "rich and wild," noting, "You could ride clear to Mexico and not strike a crossfence" (3). During Billy's boyhood years in Hidalgo County, "he woke to hear wolves in the low hills to the west of the house and he knew that they would be coming out onto the plain in the new snow to run the antelope in the moonlight" (3). Parham's recognition of wolf vocalizations in the novel's opening pages airs the formative influence of wolves on his sense of place. By listening to and watching wolves, he comes to understand the borderlands region as an ecosystem with varied terrain (low hills, plains, the Animas' peaks in the distance) that engenders dynamic interactions between wildlife species. "Harried by the wolves," the antelope move "like phantoms in the snow and circled and wheeled and the dry powder blew about them in the cold as if they burned with some inner fire" (4). Billy identifies the

interaction between wolves and antelope as an intricate choreography in which wolves participate by "Loping and twisting. Dancing. Tunneling their noses in the snow. Loping and running and rising by twos in a standing dance and running on again" (4).

Drawn outside by the wolves' howls, he watches them chase antelope on a plain on the outskirts of the Parham property and observes from afar as "the wolves twisted and turned and leapt in a silence such that they seemed of another world entire" (4). Billy's sense that "they seemed of another world entire" quickly complicates the symbolic correspondence between wolves and wild country (4). The howling wolves at first signal the place's wildness, but then, as he watches them twist and turn in silence, Billy imagines that they belong to and inhabit an indeterminate space, "another world entire" (4). When Billy hears the wolves howl, he perceives a resonant material place—immediately heard and felt—but upon seeing them leap through the air, the landscape metamorphoses into a space that is both alien and curiously attractive. McCarthy's juxtaposition of howling wolves and a silent landscape inverts the scene from the opening chapter of *The Octopus*, where Presley gives form to the California hills during moments of silence and is disrupted by the sounds of sheep. In contrast to Presley, Billy formalizes the southern New Mexico landscape by integrating the howling of wolves into his youthful vision of a wild ecosystem, as if the howls provide the soundtrack for the elaborate dance of the animals. When the wolves go silent, he perceives the space they occupy as expansive, connected to a larger space that he cannot see or articulate.

As the wolves draw closer to Billy, passing "within twenty feet of where he lay," the narrator notes that he "could feel the presence of their knowing that was electric in the air" (4). Billy recognizes an only subtly detectable "knowing" that wolves possess; this

"knowing" is amorphous and invisible, "electric in the air" like currents of energy or sound waves. In the appendix to *The Ninemile Wolves* (1992), Rick Bass also uses electricity as a metaphor for wolves' knowledge.[14] Bass observes, "There is an electricity, a tension going on inside the wolves—the actual physics of it probably fitting into some undiscovered formula, if one cares to go in that direction—a flow of sparks across the gap of too much and not enough, between 'good' and 'bad'" (139). Bass places the "tension going on inside the wolves" on a continuum; their energy is a "flow of sparks" that surges across a "gap" (139). With this provocative and beautiful description, he attempts to measure the consciousness and feeling of wolves, which might fit "some undiscovered formula" (139). Bass likens the eventual elimination of the wolves from Ninemile Valley to a "brown-out," during which "the power would dim, and the bright lights of potential—of strength in the world—would grow dimmer" (140). For Bass, wolves register "power," "strength," and perhaps most importantly "potential" that exceed corporeality. Though electricity goes on "inside of the wolves," their potential—to represent "strength in the world"—materializes outside of their bodies, as for instance when humans attribute various meanings to them (140). The elimination of wolves threatens to dim this potential, but, as with brown-outs, power can usually be restored, currents of recharged electricity once again flowing from source to multiple receivers.

Bass' representation of electric wolf-knowledge calls attention to the medium through which electricity and sound travel, the air, which is arguably as important to Billy Parham's relationship to place as land. The air has a defamiliarizing effect on Parham. Though he believes he knows how to read the land, or at least cultivate an understanding of it, Billy is at pains to comprehend air-bound forces and resonances.

Providing advice on how to capture a wolf, Don Arnulfo, a former wolf-trapper, tells Billy: "The wolf is made the way the world is made. You cannot touch the world. You cannot hold it in your hand for it is made of breath only" (46). Billy is intrigued and mystified by Don Arnulfo's advice. His comprehension of the "world," or for that matter the wolf, is limited because its substance is, in part, intangible, "made of breath only" (46) The difficulty of comprehending the world or the wolf, the old man notes, is a consequence of the invisibility of "the world between" material bodies (46). The "world" that Don Arnulfo speaks of is both made of and analogous to air, and more generally space, in that one cannot "touch" or "hold" it (46).

In these preceding accounts of wolves, those mysterious inhabitants of a "world between," Bass, Billy, and Don Arnulfo—each in their own way—register the continuous movement of wolves between internal and external spaces (46). The unknowable consciousness of wolves, as well as the potential and energy that exceed it, "goes on inside of wolves" and humans often failingly try to quantify and define it (Bass 139). Howls externalize the unquantifiable and indefinable electricity of wolves and provoke human listeners to personalize the animal other's sound. Howls travel through the space, gap, and air between the bodies of wolves and the minds of human listeners.

The air, sound theorist Brandon Labelle suggests, is a "point of departure not only for imagining but for sound as well" (204). He argues that it is "the medium by which sound becomes," and "entering…this rich medium…tunes us to the quivering of so many frequencies, filling the seeming emptiness with a multitude of energies and forces" (204-5). Due to innumerable frequencies in the sky, the air, a populated space, becomes "concrete"—a "structure, form, territory" (205). According to LaBelle, "energies and

forces" in the air engender a "poetics of the sky," which grants "the imagination a vital medium for fantasies of oblivion or hope" (205). Coursing through the sky, the howling of wolves and their subsequent silence set in motion Parham's fantasies about the places and spaces of the American Southwest and Greater Mexico. His fantasies begin as hopeful, but after he sets out to produce the wild place he longs for, Billy finds himself in a liminal, abstract space that he cannot navigate. McCarthy sets Parham's journeys in local places as well as in a global space on the verge of warfare and a region with a history of violent conflict.

Boundaries "Without Regard"

Because of its blood-curdling effects, its capacity to produce fear, the wolf's howl reflects air raid signals and aerial bombardment, which were keynote sounds before and during the Second World War.[15] World War II forms a significant historical backdrop for McCarthy's novel, though Billy Parham seems blissfully unaware that the United States is on the brink of entering the war as he sets out on journeys to and fro Mexico. Even if he is aware of the war, the brutality of warfare, which involves violent reconceptualizations of borders, does not fit his youthful sentiments about a fenceless wild—at least not at the outset of the novel. Parham's ignorance of global warfare mirrors the theriophobia that Lopez suggests marks historical attitudes toward wolves. He fails to recognize his own potential for violence, which his countrymen are coming to terms with on battlefields in Europe, Asia, and Africa in the early 40s. Billy's inapprehension of World War II is particularly intriguing for reasons related to his geographical location.

In December of 1941, preparing for the United States' war effort, the federal and state governments cooperated to cancel public land grazing leases on 3,200 square miles of land in southern New Mexico for what would become the Alamogordo Bombing and Gunnery Range, later renamed the White Sands Missile Range.[16] As the war efforts near his home in southern New Mexico, Parham remains unaware of the approach of global warfare. He comes closest to facing the violent realities of World War II when, following the death of his brother in Mexico, he attempts to enroll in the armed services; ultimately, he is refused for a irregular heartbeat, even as the war efforts rage on. Although Parham should not be expected to anticipate this constellation of events as he heads as a teenager into Mexico, as an Anglo inhabitant of the borderlands, he should be familiar with the complicity of the United States in international warfare and its concomitant violence.

McCarthy has addressed the legacy of violent conquest in the U.S.-Mexican borderlands in his earlier work. The epic *Blood Meridian or the Evening Redness in the West*, as Susan Kollin suggests, represents "a West fully corrupted from the moment Anglos arrived" (562). McCarthy's nineteenth-century West in *Blood Meridian* is "emptied of its sacred qualities…a fully defiled, profaned space" (562). The legacy of Anglo violence in the borderlands also resonates in *The Crossing*, set nearly a century later, despite Parham's efforts to reclaim the West as a site for innocent and romantic exploration by white men. Later in this chapter, I address Billy's encounters with violence in the borderlands, suggesting that his nostalgia for wild places causes cross-cultural conflict. Here, I assess his efforts to produce a homeplace where wolves and the wildness they represent are protected, for such efforts undergird his volatile relationships

with others in places that do not fit his hopeful fantasies.

Particularly for people in the ranching industry, the wolf's howl often alerts humans to the threat of violence. Billy, however, does not associate it with conflict, near (on the ranchlands, in the U.S.-Mexican borderlands) or far (in Europe, Asia, and Africa). Though readers ought not expect him to associate the howl with regional or global conflict, his protection of the wolf is clearly incompatible with the expectations of the ranching community in which he is raised, a community that depends upon the protection of livestock against wolves. Ashley Bourne suggests that Parham's response to wolves is "a transgression in a community full of ranchers and livestock"; his "feeling" for wolves demonstrates his commitment to a "wildness, whether embodied in a landscape, animal or people," that "will call out to Billy all his life" (115). Kollin adds that, in its representation of Billy's "search for the wild," *The Crossing* is interested in "restoring an ecological vision to the Western" (576). Certainly, Billy's transgression demonstrates an ecological ethic that many readers will sympathize with. Yet, as he takes action to preserve wolves (or at least a wolf), Parham ignores the advice of elders in his community, such as Don Arnulfo, who suggest he cannot affect the "great order" of which wolves are a part (McCarthy 44). Parham's redeeming ecological ethic is interwoven within his disregard for the input of others who know more about the history of his homeplace and its inhabitants than him. Failing to comprehend Arnulfo's advice, Billy assumes that he has the ability to preserve order by not only capturing the wolf but also restoring her to a home in Mexico.

While hunting the she-wolf that has been killing cattle, Billy tries to identify with her rather than seeing her as a rival for his family's business pursuits. Observing the

footprints of the wolf in the snow, he constructs a romantic image of her:

> He closed his eyes and tried to see her. Her and others of her kind, wolves and ghosts running in the whiteness of that high world as perfect to their use as if their counsel had been sought in the devising of it. (31)

In his imagination, the wolf and "others of her kind" occupy the land, a "high world" blanketed by "whiteness," as "ghosts" do (31). This association of wolves with ghosts momentarily removes wolves as well as Billy from a material place where he and other ranchers are at odds with predatory animals. He ignores conflict in favor of an imagined world where wolves are "perfect to their use as if their counsel had been sought in the devising of it" (31). But what "use" do wolves serve and for whom (for themselves, for humans, for wild ecosystems)? And what ecological and/or social conditions permit wolves to be "perfect to their use"? Do those conditions exist in the places that Parham occupies? McCarthy's novel only answers the last of these questions, presenting Billy's romantic vision of wolves as irreconcilable with the ecological and social conditions of the midcentury borderlands. The United States is entering World War II and using wolf habitat in New Mexico for bombing practice; Mexico is moving to an industrial economy and displacing wolves from their territories; and ranchers are being displaced from their lands and cannot afford to let wolves kill their diminishing stock.

The use of the word "ghosts" associates wolves with the dead, an appropriate association in light of the historical slaughter of wolf species in the West. As ghosts, wolves return from the dead, reviving the past and stimulating as well as haunting Billy in the present. Laying awake at night, he tries to "see the world the wolf saw"; "think[s] about it running in the mountains at night" (51); and wonders about "the world it smelled or what it tasted" (51-52). The sensual "world" of the wolf that he imagines reflects the

type of place he wants to inhabit, one where wildness corresponds with the freedom to produce place, a freedom that in reality is granted to some more so than others. Billy's hopeful vision of idyllic homeplace ultimately disorients him, blinding him to ongoing conflicts within the regional and global space in which Hidalgo County, New Mexico is situated.

Billy's shortsighted spatial awareness affects him when he crosses the U.S.-Mexican border without concern for cultural differences or the historical tension between the two nations. Upon venturing into Mexico for the first time, with the trapped she-wolf in tow, Billy is informed by a young don that boundaries stand "without regard" for the ignorance or knowledge of those who cross them (119). The man is referring to the wolf's border crossing, first into the United States and then back into Mexico, but he may as well also be referring to the travels of Billy, who has begun to model himself after the wolf and has crossed the border "without regard" for boundaries. Billy has traveled to Mexico on this first journey to return the trapped she-wolf to her home in the mountains of northern Mexico.

The she-wolf wandered into New Mexico after her mate was trapped in the mountains of Sonora and subsequently killed by horsemen. Without her mate or her pack, in a desperate search for food, she travels northward into the Sierra de la Madera but, due to the advance of industry, finds little to feed her in the developed high country: "She found little to eat. Most of the game was slaughtered out of the country. Most of the forest cut to feed the boilers of the stampmills at the mines" (25). The absence of prey drives her to the valleys of southern New Mexico and the Parhams' ranchlands, where the wolf begins to slaughter and consume cattle. Under the direction of his father

and Don Arnulfo, Billy takes up the task of trapping the wolf and, after days of failed attempts, is impressed by her evasiveness.[17] He eventually captures her by burying a steel trap in an abandoned fire ring. Upon capturing the wolf, he decides not to kill her, choosing instead to rig a muzzle and trappings and lead her back to Mexico.

Though motivated principally by compassion, represented movingly by McCarthy, Billy's decision to return the wolf to her "home" demonstrates his naïve belief in home as a place that tentatively safeguards the character of its residents, permitting them to freely produce the place they desire (59).[18] The safety and stability provided by home, Billy senses, should be provisional so as to preserve the particular type of wildness that he values. His sense of belonging to place, the Parham family's homestead, depends on encounters with wildness, specifically in the form of wolves or, in another instance, an Indian squatting on their land.

Paralleling Billy's encounter with wild wolves at the start of the novel, on the outskirts of their property, Billy and Boyd come across an Indian who threateningly instructs them to provide him with food and not inform their parents of his presence. Upon looking into the Indian's eyes, Billy sees his own image reflected:

> He had not known that you could see yourself in others' eyes nor see therein such things as suns. He stood twinned in those dark wells with hair so pale, so thin and strange, the selfsame child. As if it were some cognate child to him that had been lost who now stood windowed away in another world where the red sun sank eternally. As if it were a maze where these orphans of his heart had miswandered in their journey in life and so arrived at last beyond the wall of that antique gaze from whence there could be no way back forever. (6)

In this passage, Billy does not attempt to know or understand the Indian, but instead dwells on his own reflected image in the "others' eyes" (6). The distorted reflection mirrors Billy's earlier encounter with wolves leaping through the air, for the "cognate

child" Billy sees reflected stands "windowed away in another world," just as the wolves to him "seemed of another world entire" (4). Taken together, these passages suggest that Parham's visual encounters with others provoke a static self-reflective process. Rather than revising his understanding of wolves, Indians, and the wild, he repeatedly associates them with a mythic wildness, set in the past, "from whence there could be no way back forever" (6). The presence of wolves and Indians do not make his home wild. Rather, Billy maintains his home's wildness by repeatedly projecting his desires onto the other.

McCarthy's repetition of "As if it were" in the above passage renders Billy's potential recognition of himself in the others' eyes uncertain (6). The child reflected through the Indian's "antique gaze" is vaguely familiar, and yet the image transforms into a figure or figures, "orphans of his heart," that appear to have "miswandered in their journey" (6). Though Billy senses something foreboding in the reflected "maze," he responds optimistically to this encounter with the unknown (6). He sneaks out of his bed at night; takes a tin cup of beans, steak, and biscuits from the family's pantry; and delivers them to the Indian. When Boyd asks his older brother if they ought to have "gone out there to start with" (12), Billy responds, "I dont know" (13). This honest response—Billy often acts without forethought—belies his desire for wildness as well as his sense that he is safe and in control at his home. Billy sees the Indian less as a threat to his family's safety than a confirmation that his home is a wild place, where people and animals roam free and without conflict. Unfortunately, this naïve understanding of his home as both safe and wild is tragically shaken when, after his first trip to Mexico, he returns to find out that his parents have been murdered in his absence.

Parham's encounters with wildness depend on flexible boundaries that can be

easily crossed. McCarthy represents the U.S.-Mexico border of the midtwentieth century as a permeable boundary, describing the precise geographic coordinates of the wolf's initial crossing into the United States without mention of any physical obstacle to her passage:

> The wolf had crossed the international boundary line at about the point where it intersected the thirtieth minute of the one hundred and eighth meridian and she had crossed the old Nations road a mile north of the boundary and followed Whitewater Creek west up into the San Luis Mountains and crossed through the gap north to the Animas Valley and on into Peloncillos. (24)

Billy's own border crossings are conducted with such ease that "the international boundary line" may well itself be a "gap," like the "old Nations road" or Whitewater Creek, that permits effortless travel. Passing into Mexico, "man and wolf and horse" travel "over a terraceland of low hills much eroded by the wind and they crossed through a fenceline or crossed where a fenceline once had been" (73). For Billy, the U.S.-Mexican border is little more than an abandoned fenceline, the trace of a structure that once divided the two nations. Low hills "much eroded by wind" surround the boundary line, suggesting that the place's topography does not distinguish Mexico from the United States. "Mexico, State of Sonora" is "undifferentiated in its terrain from the country they quit and yet wholly alien and strange" (74). In the absence of a durable physical marker separating the two nations, mounted atop his horse, Billy sets off into Mexico on an idealistic journey to restore the wolf to her home. The history of the wolf in North America, briefly reviewed at the start of this chapter, suggests that wolves' "home" has been, like the borderlands region itself, a contested habitat since the westward advance of Anglo-American civilization began. Still to this point immersed in his fantasy about wild places in the West (and Mexico), Parham fails to register this history of conflict.

Subsequent crossings at the U.S.-Mexico border are equally uncomplicated for him, even when he passes through guarded stations, but in later scenes, Billy's body and psyche are marked by his experiences in Mexico's interior. When he crosses back into the United States for the first time through Douglas, Arizona, a border guard tells a bedraggled Billy, "You look like maybe you stayed a little longer than what you intended" (162). The way Billy looks to the border guard only tells part of his story. The marking of his body through violence corresponds with Billy's growing awareness that wild country in Mexico and the United States is, like his own body, marked by conflict. During his wayward journeys in northern Mexico, he begins to register the legacy of violent conquest in the borderlands, a legacy that Patricia Limerick Nelson suggests "Americans are left to stumble over—and sometimes into" due to "the peculiar status of Western American history," which has tended to dissociate the tensions of the present from those of the past (18).[19]

The Shortsightedness of Ocular Ground

In "Topographies of Transition in Western American Literature," tracing an "accumulating trajectory" of concerns about place in "McCarthy's fiction particularly" and in "western American writing generally," Steve Tatum attends to the "desire" that "motivates the actual and imaginative explorations both of one's own country and also of that country hovering over there just beyond the visible distance" (312). Tatum's attention to desire in relationship to place is relevant to my discussion of the novel's representation of the unseen space that Billy repeatedly drifts toward. His desire for wild country is projected onto the wolf, an elusive animal with (as Bass and McCarthy

suggest) an often invisible, electric energy. For most of the novel, the wolf is "beyond the visible distance," a romantic symbol of the wildness he desires (312).

When Billy takes possession of the she-wolf, he begins to demonstrate an alarming disregard for the cultural dynamics that circle and cross the wolf's home in the mountains of northern Mexico. The culture that Parham encounters in the villages of northern Mexico is transitioning to an industrial economy, creating stamp mills in and around wolf habitat, and does not place the same value on ecological wildness that he does. Its politicians and lawmen place economic needs before any valuation of the wolf as a romantic symbol of wildness.[20] Though Billy's rudimentary environmental ethic appears to be just, to him as well as potentially the readers, his project is doomed to fail because he does not consider the divergent perspectives and customs of others who occupy the place where he conducts his relocation efforts.

In the mountains of northern Mexico, Billy encounters a group of Mexican lawmen, who claim possession of the wolf and take her to the "feria," or fair, where they plan to employ her as an attraction and ultimately a spectacle in a dog-fighting ring (101-102). As a sixteen-year old boy without "documentos," documentation identifying him as an American citizen, Parham can offer little resistance to the authority of these men and instead follows them, waiting for the opportunity to set the wolf free (95). These men recognize the monetary value of the wolf and reconstruct her history, telling Billy, who knows the story of her capture better than them, that they caught her in the "barbarous and wild" mountains of Sonora and plan "to sell the animal at some price" (118). Instead of selling the wolf, they set up a dog-fighting ring in a barn, gather a large audience, chain the wolf to a post in the center of the ring, and unleash a series of canine

attackers. After observing the wolf fend off several opponents, Billy intervenes, stepping into the ring and pressing his body against hers while reasserting his intention to return the wolf to the mountains. A hacendado, or prominent land-owner, disputes Billy's claim over the wolf and tells him, "You think that this country is some country you can come to and do what you like" (119). Clarifying the reason for his audacity, Billy replies, "I never thought about this country one way or the other" (119). His response is honest and forthright; he has not "thought" about Mexico or its laws. Instead, without forethought, he has assumed that "this country" would permit his quest (119). His lack of consideration does not justify his actions to the crowd but, instead, causes conflict.

Defiantly, Billy briefly undoes the wolf's trappings, but when the hacendado draws a revolver from his waistband, he relents, replaces the chain to her collar, and walks out of the ring. Parham returns to the barn shortly thereafter with his rifle, taking aim and firing at the bleeding and suffering wolf:

> The echo of the shot in the closed space of the barn rattled all else into silence. The Airedales dropped to all fours and whined and circled behind the handlers. No one moved. The blue riflesmoke hung in the air. The wolf lay stretched out dead. (122)

The silence that follows the rifle shot conveys the tension "in the closed space of the barn," while also highlighting an interaction between loud and hushed sounds that will resonate again when, during Billy's return to the United States, he considers the absence of wolves in the mountains (122). Though surrounded by a stunned and angry crowd, Billy refuses to surrender his rifle and only survives his defiance because the regional sheriff instructs them, "Bastante [Enough]…No le moleste [Do not harm him]" (123). Billy then trades his rifle for the wolf's corpse and fulfills the promise he made "to take her to the mountains where she would find others of her kind" (105).

In a heartrending scene that concludes the first part of the novel, Billy squats over the wolf's corpse, touches her fur and teeth, closes her eye with his thumb, and closes his own eyes so that "he could see her running in the mountains, running in the starlight where the grass was wet and the sun's coming as yet had not undone the rich matrix of creatures passed in the night before her" (127). Closing his eyes to fabricate this landscape, Billy seems to recognize that the wild place he has been imagining is, in fact, imagined. His experiences in Mexico have revealed a different form of wildness, a brutal violence carried out by lawmen, landowners, and village people who dissociate themselves from wilderness by making a spectacle of it. Moreover, Billy witnesses his own brutality, as he is the one who kills the wolf, claiming in the process a moral superiority that is a characteristic feature of Euro-American imperialism in the United States and Mexico. Justifying his own performance of violence, he views himself and the wolf as victims of the malpractice of others, here Mexican nationals. Limerick suggests that "decades of expansion left…victimization entrenched in Western thinking," convincing white westerners that "misfortune" was "the doing of an outside force, preying on innocence and vulnerability, refusing to play by the rules of fairness" (47). This sense of victimization, apparent in Billy's response to the wolf's treatment in the Mexican village, prevents him from considering his own "participation" in "courting" the misfortune of the wolf or himself (47).

Billy's later actions in Mexico replicate human wildness, discharged in the name of civilization, albeit in a different form. However, immediately following the wolf's death, he continues to imagine a home for the wolf in the highlands of northern Mexico:

> Deer and hare and dove and groundvole all richly empaneled on the air for her delight, all nations of the possible world ordained by God of which she was one

> among and not separate from. Where she ran the cries of coyotes clapped shut as if a door had closed upon them and all was fear and marvel. He took up her stiff head out of the leaves and held it or he reached to hold what cannot be held, what already ran among the mountains at once terrible and of a great beauty, like flowers that feed on flesh. (127)

In the landscape he envisions, "all nations of the possible world" cooperate, creating a space where the wolf is "one among and not separate from" other species.[21] Though this space has an egalitarian quality, the wolf nonetheless maintains a position of respect in it; coyotes "clap shut" wherever she runs. Reality intrudes on Parham's imagined biocommunity in the final sentence when he perceives the mountains as "at once terrible and of a great beauty," a place where "flowers…feed on flesh" (127). The morbidity of this final image reflects his growing understanding that "all nations" do not cooperate. Instead, discord between separate nations, or between separate people or animal species within a single nation, creates bloody conflicts that "feed" the earth with spilled blood (127). This reality unravels Billy's ecological vision.

Traveling back to the United States, Billy rides through the mountains and sets up camp for a night in the high country:

> In that wild high country he'd lie in the cold and the dark and listen to the wind and watch the last few embers of his fire at their dying and the red crazings in the woodcoals where they broke along their unguessed gridlines. As if in the trying of the wood were elicited hidden geometries and their orders which could only stand fully revealed, such is the way of the world, in darkness and ashes. He heard no wolves. (130)

For a moment, an abstract vision of geometric space appears to guide Parham's dark meditation. But then, the absence of the wolves' howls punctuates the passage, confirming his melancholic perception that this place—a mountain range just south of the New Mexico-Mexico border—does not have a discernible order. Without the howl of a wolf, Parham is left searching for order "in darkness and ashes" (130). Sonic content, or

here its absence, confirms what he sees; were a wolf to howl, the boy's despondent observations would be interrupted and the wildness of the place might be restored. The absence of howls in the mountains makes Parham restless and unsatisfied; these emotional states propel the character into continuous motion.

The absence of howls has a palpable influence on Billy's immersion in abstract space throughout the rest of the novel. Regardless of Billy's desire to hear wolves howling in the mountains, he can only "listen to the wind" (ibid.). He trusts in this auditory evidence, the absence of howls communicating the absence of wild places to support and preserve wolves. Yet, there is tension in this silence. A gap remains in his trust—as if what he is perceiving is a brown-out, and at any moment, a wolf might howl, restoring "the bright lights of potential—of strength in the world" (Bass 140).

Minding the Gap

In the introduction to this dissertation, I consider the paradigmatic role of grids in the imperialistic organization of the places and spaces of the American West. As I conclude this chapter, I attend to maps as an extension of the practice of gridding the region, for they usually leave out more information than they include. McCarthy's novel represents the information provided by maps as unreliable. Tatum argues that *The Crossing* exemplifies a prevalent concern in Western American writing with "geographical tropes associated with mapping and place naming or the circulation of bodies across borders in order strategically to represent and then critique…the colonizing imagination's perpetual desire for mastery, stability, and containment" (313). Maps provide a supposedly trustworthy medium through which to navigate real space, yet

McCarthy's novel represents maps as incomplete, as when an old man tells the brothers Parham that "it was not so much a question of a correct map but of any map at all…in that country there were fires and earthquakes and floods and…one needed to know the country itself and not simply the landmarks therein" (McCarthy 184-85). The old man spots a gap in the relationship between maps, a written representation of mental space, and the real places the Parhams navigate. If Billy can mind this gap, using a map does not put him in danger. Minding the gap, according to the old man, involves employing intuition rather than simply relying upon a map:

> …in any case a bad map was worse than no map at all for it engendered in the traveler a false confidence and might easily cause him to set aside those instincts which would otherwise guide him if he would but place himself in their care. (185)

This appraisal of instincts—a particular kind of intuition—implicitly justifies the brothers' fascination with wolves. Relative to the intuition of human beings, the instincts of wolves are relatively unmediated. Certainly, wolves develop cognitive maps, often based upon sonic cues, but they do not question the gaps in these maps; they appear to know with some certainty where they are going. Billy Parham observes that wolves possess superior instincts, which he then failingly tries to cultivate in himself. Yet, as Billy's experiences in northern Mexico confirm, wolves sometimes fair no better than people.

When McCarthy's she-wolf encounters humans, her instincts are relatively ineffectual. Prior to being captured, the wolf remains wild, honing her instincts and migrating to unexpected locations in a stubborn pursuit for survival. Lopez attributes the survival of wolves not only to their instincts but also to cooperation within and across packs, claiming,

> The wolf is a social animal; it depends for its survival on cooperation, not strife. Human beings, particularly in recent years, have grown accustomed to speaking of "dominance hierarchies" in business corporations or elsewhere, and the tendency has been to want wolf packs…to conform to similar models. The social structure of a wolf pack is dynamic—subject to change… (33)

The adaptability of wolves, whose social structure is "dynamic," confers their difference from humans (33). This is not to say that the social structure of humans is never dynamic, nor that people cannot adapt, but rather that, ensconced within abstract space, people (often unwittingly) entrust discursive representations of space, produced by established ideologies and mythologies, to guide them. In contrast, wolves respond to the availability of prey within an ecosystem, or biological community, moving to new territory when a range cannot provide the pack with ample sustenance. In the process of relocating themselves, they demonstrate sensitivity to the proximity of other packs. They employ "howling and scent marking" as well as other instinctual practices to assure "that a proper space exists between packs, thus tending to distribute food sources and ensure space for all concerned" (Lopez 66). This organic relationship to space demonstrates wolves' pragmatic concern for others. Their concern for others is unsentimental, based on instinctual efforts to prevent conflict with other packs so as to ensure survival.

Though he sees himself as helping the she-wolf, by capturing and attempting to relocate her, Billy intrudes on the wolf's instinctual establishment of new territory in southern New Mexico. His feelings and actions toward the wolf are acutely marked by his situation within abstract space. Lefebvre remarks that, within abstract space, "History is experienced as nostalgia, and nature as regret—as a horizon fast disappearing behind us" (51). These postulations explain Billy's nostalgic relationship to wolves, a symbol of "nature" that is "fast disappearing" (51). Unaware that the sentiments motivating his

actions are nostalgic—perhaps because, as Lefebvre suggests, "affectivity" is relegated to the "unconscious"—Billy effectually projects wolves into the abstract space that he unknowingly occupies (Lefebvre 51). If wolves are "behind us," or ghosts from the past, as Billy's nostalgic sentiments intuit, then the she-wolf's story is destined to end tragically (51). So, too, is Billy's quest to cultivate the wildness in himself that he identifies in the wolf.

Upon his return to his hometown, Billy appears to "people passing in the street" as "Something in off the wild mesas, something out of the past. Ragged, dirty, hungry in eye and belly" (170). He looks to have cultivated in himself the very wildness that he so revered at the start of the novel. The results, evidently, are not so romantic as he might have imagined; he is "ragged, dirty, hungry in eye and belly" (170) He is an outcast, an "outlandish figure," who is "totally unspoken for" (170). Billy quickly learns that, in his absence, his parents have been killed and their horses stolen, redoubling the loss that began when the she-wolf was taken from him. Billy returns to Mexico with his brother Boyd in pursuit of justice, hoping, it seems, that the successful recovery of the family's horses will help them recuperate from the tragic loss of their parents. By continuing to operate according to familiar frontier narratives—man's attempted mastery of nature, his revenge for injustice—Billy demonstrates just how entrenched he is within a codified space. In a novel that represents a seemingly endless accumulation of losses, the greatest tragedy of all is that he can find no strategy by which to navigate peaceably the midtwentieth century borderlands.

In the novel's conclusion, alone in an abandoned shack in southern Arizona, Billy encounters the she-wolf's uncanny double in the figure of a stray dog that "had perhaps

once been a hunting dog…left for dead in the mountains or by some highwayside" (424). He perceives the dog as a "repository of ten thousand indignities and the harbinger of God knew what," suggesting that the dog not only mirrors the wolf but also Billy, whose suffering McCarthy relentlessly documents (424). Parham chases the dog from the shack and throws rocks at it. As it hobbles away "brokenly on its twisted legs," the dog howls with "a terrible sound. Something not of this earth. As if some composite of grief had broke through from the preterite world" (424). McCarthy's description of the dog's howl reverses Billy's perception of wolves. The dog's howl expresses profound grief rather than inspiring hopeful notions about "rich and wild" country (3).[22] The next morning, regretful of his treatment of the dog, Billy wanders out to the road and calls for it to return: "He called and called. Standing in that inexplicable darkness. Where there was no sound anywhere save only the wind" (425-26). The darkness and the soundlessness of his location in the novel's final scene mark space as finally and completely indistinct. Confronted by a "godmade sun" that rises "once again, for all and without distinction," Billy sits on the road and weeps (426). His quest, which began with an effort to preserve the wolf so as to prevent loss, ends with further loss and an expression of grief.

Though Billy appears to have surrendered to utter hopelessness, in this moment, he develops a new spatial awareness, characterized by suspicion.[23] His visible and audible expression of grief, repeatedly checked to this point despite numerous losses, demonstrates his overdue recognition that he cannot control his surroundings. Such acceptance is necessary if Billy is to register the differences and navigate the boundaries of place, which repeatedly confound the formulaic narratives he has been operating within. His suspicion of the dog, or of contact with others more generally, suggests that

he perceives differences and boundaries as obstacles rather than as opportunities by which to cultivate a new relationship to place. Nonetheless, in an attempt to recover a glimmer of hope from a largely pessimistic tale, I would argue that Billy's movement from nostalgia to hopefulness to suspicion signal his approach to "a new space" that "accentuates differences" (Lefebvre 52). Despite the novel's title and its representation of numerous border crossings, Billy circles rather than crosses the "yawning gap" that "carries…the seeds of a new kind of space" (Lefebvre 52).

According to the accounts of Lopez, Bass, and McCarthy, wolves, in contrast, seem to reside in that very gap. Their "knowing," expressed in howls and via their "electric" presence, manifests in their intuitive ability to adapt without question and, perhaps more importantly, in cooperation with others of their species. In a well-known passage from *The Sand County Almanac* about his experiences in Arizona and New Mexico, Aldo Leopold writes,

> A deep chesty bawl echoes from rimrock to rimrock, rolls down the mountain, and fades into the far blackness of the night. It is an outburst of wild defiant sorrow, and of contempt for all the adversities of the world…Every living thing (and perhaps many a dead one as well) pays heed to that call…Yet behind these obvious and immediate hopes and fears there lies a deeper meaning, known only to the mountain itself. Only the mountain has lived long enough to listen objectively to the howl of a wolf. (129)

Humans will never live "long enough to listen objectively to the howl of a wolf," but they can and sometimes do tenuously grasp its "meaning," discovering in the howl the incompleteness of their understanding of place and space. By listening, we might better understand how to occupy and navigate place and space with a redemptive and graceful "contempt for all the adversities of the world" (129).

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[1] McCarthy, Cormac. *The Crossing*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994. 130.

[2] Leopold, Aldo. "Thinking Like a Mountain." *A Sand County Almanac*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1966. 129.
[3] Harrington and Mech attempt to demystify the acoustic characteristics and functions of wolf howls, and other vocalization techniques, in their essay "Wolf Vocalization," published in *Wolf and Man: Evolution in Parallel* (1978).
[4] Lopez addresses scent marking and glandular secretion as a "third kind of communication" used by wolves (vocalizations and body gesturing are the first two types), noting that the primary function of scent marking "is to mark territory on a regular basis for the benefit of the resident pack" (48). Borrowing from the research of American behavioral psychologist Roger Peters, who worked alongside wolf expert L. David Mech, Lopez observes that "the marks are an aid in establishing cognitive maps for the younger wolves, mental pictures of the home range, so that they know where they are with respect to certain creeks or recent kills and how to get where they wish to go" (Lopez 48).
[5] For a scientific account of wolf behavior, see Mech, David L. *The Wolf: The Ecology and Behavior of an Endangered Species*. New York: Natural History Books, 1970.
[6] Rick Bass suggests, "The fear surrounding wolves and their abilities is so much larger than the animal itself that perhaps our excessive fear *gives* wolves a special, extra power" (106).
[7] In heartbreaking fashion, Lopez documents the savage practices used to trap and kill wolves. They include traps that cause wolves great pain, poisons, and aerial hunting techniques that truly take the sport out of hunting. Lopez notes, "A lot of people didn't just kill wolves; they tortured them. They set wolves on fire and tore their jaws and cut their Achilles tendons and turned dogs loose on them. They poisoned them with strychnine, arsenic, and cyanide, on such a scale that millions of other animals—raccoons, black-footed ferrets, red foxes, ravens, red-tailed hawks, eagles, ground squirrels, wolverines—were killed incidentally in the process. In the thick of the wolf fever they were even poisoned themselves, and burned down their own property torching the woods to get rid of wolf havens" (139).
[8] It is also worth noting that London writes about dogs, or hybrid wolves, more often than wild wolves.
[9]The re-emergence of the wolf in literature is partly indebted to public debates during the 1980s and 90s about wolf reintroduction programs across the West, which were well-covered by the media.
[10] In the introduction to *Sonic Experience: A Guide to Everyday Sounds*, Jean-Francois Augoyard and Henry Torgue characterize "sonic effect" as "the interaction of the physical signal and the perceptive intentionality, without which there would be no perception" (6). The sonic effect, which is "paradigmatic," allows "a general discourse about sounds" without dispensing with concrete examples: "Rather than defining things in a closed way, it opens the field to a new class of phenomena by giving some indication of their nature and their status" (9). Augoyard and Torgue add that, "because of these properties"—generality and openness—"the sonic effect traverses and is enriched by different fields of knowledge and experience" (9-10).
[11] In particular, Lefebvre notes, "Capitalism and neocapitalism have produced abstract space, which includes the 'world of commodities,' its logic and its worldwide strategies, as well as the power of money and that of the political state" (53). As I suggest in the previous chapter, the transnational capitalism of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries sometimes functions as an extension of U.S. imperialist practices.
[12] In "'Plenty of signs and wonders to make a landscape': Space, Place, and Identity in Cormac McCarthy's *Border Trilogy*," Ashley Bourne similarly observes, "Consistently, once a place is established in the protagonists' minds, once they think they have defined it, it inevitably seems to disintegrate into space, unknowable and without external meaning" (118).
[13] The parenthetical "or several" references Deleuze and Guattari's plateau "1914: One or Several Wolves?" from *A Thousand Plateaus*. Deleuze and Guattari critique Freudian psychoanalysis by attending to his work on the Wolf-Man. They claim that, "reverting to his familiar themes of *the* father, *the* penis, *the* vagina, Castration with a capital *C*," Freud misreads the Wolf-Man's dream about wolves by failing to recognize them as a multiplicity rather than a singularity. In an earlier section of this chapter, I refer to Lopez's description of howling harmony that creates "the impression of more animals howling than there actually are" (Lopez 38). Perhaps, we might speculate, this appearance of harmony contributes to the reading of wolves as a singularity by Freud or, for that matter, by some wildlife biologists, land managers, ranchmen, and wolf enthusiasts.
[14] This book details a small wolf-pack that unpredictably settled in Montana's Ninemile Valley in 1990.
[15] LaBelle suggests, "The sky is both an image of absolute freedom and a vague territory able to deliver thunderous wrath of the supernatural. Or in the case of military battle, the terror of aerial bombardment.

The air raid signal of the Second World War piercing the urban environment sends the population underground, while the sky fills with tons of lethal metal" (206).

[16] Ironically enough, during the 1980s and 90s, proponents of wolf reintroduction in the Southwest proposed land on the White Sands Missile Range as a potential habitat for reintroduced Mexican wolves.

[17] Lopez notes, "Wolves are elusive, secretive creatures…Elusiveness is a defensive trait, and it is conceivable that its function is to avoid detection by other wolves, so adjacent packs can overlap their territories and run little risk of fatally encountering each other" (65). In this sense, elusiveness is a trait deserving of admiration; it demonstrates an awareness of and cooperation with other groups, or packs.

[18] Lucy Lippard begins *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society* with the claim that "Place…is the locus of desire" (4). In *Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert*, the book that I analyze in Chapter 3, Terry Tempest Williams similarly represents place as desire, observing that her desire takes on the red color of Utah's canyon country. Moreover, the canyon country seems to be colored by her desire, creating an endless loop between desire and place.

[19] In *The Legacy of Conquest*, Patricia Nelson Limerick observes, "The conquest of Western America shapes the present as dramatically—and sometimes as perilously—as the old mines shape the mountainsides. To live with that legacy, contemporary Americans ought to be well informed and well warned about the connections between the past and present. But here the peculiar status of Western American history has posed an obstacle to understanding. Americans are left to stumble over—and sometimes into—those connections, caught off guard by the continued vitality of issues widely believed to be dead" (18).

[20] Wolf relocation programs from the 1980s onward have demonstrated the importance of cultural and political negotiation—between environmental activists, ranchers, and policy makers—and have often failed due to communication breakdowns.

[21] In a subsection of her essay "Genre and Geographies of Violence," Kollin refers to *The Crossing* as an "ecological western" and claims that the novel details "the costs" of the conventional Western "dream"—the "search of the wild" and the "seductions of the frontier"—and "[restores] an ecological vision to the Western" (576). The wolf performs a central role in the novel's exposition of an ecological vision: "Having lost the kind of safety she once had, the wolf knows better than to devote herself to old pathways and, in that sense, differs from the novel's other western characters, who are caught up in nostalgic efforts to stop their world from changing. McCarthy restructures the codes so that here the sense of loss is experienced by nonhuman nature in the form of a wolf who is also a fully developed character. It is the she-wolf, in other words, who is structured by elegy, rather than the Anglo hero" (576-77).

[22] The description of the dog's howl matches common characterizations of the wolf's howl. Lopez quotes James Capen Adams, "a self-styled mountaineer and grizzly bear hunter from California," who describes the wolf's howl as "a horrible noise, the most hateful a man alone in the wilderness at night can hear…To a person anywise low-spirited, it suggests the most awful fancies, and it is altogether doleful in the extreme" (175). Lopez describes Adams' characterization of the howl as "typical" in that most accounts align it with loneliness.

[23] This suggestion, that Billy's spatial awareness evolves at the close of *The Crossing*, invites a close reading of *Cities of the Plain*, the next novel in *The Border Trilogy*, in which Billy Parham returns to Mexico with John Grady Cole, the protagonist of *All the Pretty Horses*.

CHAPTER 4

TERRY TEMPEST WILLIAMS' ORAL LITERATURE: "A SECRET PARTNERSHIP OF POSSIBILITY"

> *If human discourse is experienced by indigenous, oral peoples to be participant with the speech of birds, wolves, and even of the wind, how could it ever have become severed from that vaster life? How could we ever have become so deaf to these other voices that nonhuman nature now seems to stand mute and dumb, devoid of any meaning besides that which we choose to give it?*
>
> ~David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous*[1]

> *The organic nature of speech is the confluence of earth and sound. It is spoken and it is read.*
>
> ~Terry Tempest Williams, *Red*[2]

Spurring Conversation through Story

In an interview with Derrick Jansen from 1995, Terry Tempest Williams professes,

> Paradox is life. It's the same thing as balance. You can't have one without the other. There's always that creative third, which is where possibility lies…this "third thing," which in this case is conversation or understanding, becomes the creative expression of an idea. Art. Story. (44)

Paradox is similar to balance for Williams in that it engenders conversation. It produces the "possibility" of resolution (44). Such resolution does not manifest in a problem

solved but rather in a conversation that grants new, and perhaps improved, "understanding" of a problem (44). Conversation, which primarily denotes "a *spoken* exchange of thoughts, opinions, and feelings; a *talk*," can be articulated, according to Williams, through art and story (*Oxford English Dictionary*, emphasis added).[3] Of course, as a writer, she does not explicitly speak or talk. However, she implies that, like paradox and balance, orality and written discourse commingle and interwine in her work, producing "this third thing" (Jensen 44). For Williams, this "third thing" is conversation articulated through writing (44). As an exchange rather than a unidirectional utterance, conversation enables, what she elsewhere calls, a "being in relation" by which people "feel the magnetic pull in our bodies toward something stronger, more vital than simply ourselves" (*Red* 106).[4]

In "Home Work," the opening essay to *Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert*, Williams considers how to instigate conversations about land use in the redrock desert and canyon country of southern Utah. Polite conversations about land use are not commonplace in Utah, or more generally in the American West, where according to Williams "powerful divisive opinions" fuel contentious debates over issues such as "cows grazing on public lands, water rights, nuclear waste dumps in the desert, the creation of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, or the designation of wilderness" (3). Though she writes on behalf of environmental preservation and has been actively involved in political efforts to arrest destructive development of wild lands, Williams attributes the hostile tone of debates about land use to environmentalists as well as representatives of development. During the aforementioned interview with Jensen, she notes, "The environmental movement right now is not listening. We are engaged in a

rhetoric as strong and aggressive as the so-called opposition" (39). The rhetoric of the environmental movement, according to Williams, confounds efforts to effect policy change or compromise in the name of environmental preservation. Rather than serving to instigate conversations about land use, antagonistic rhetoric merely provokes opposition and, in the process, prevents the "listening" that Williams advocates (39).

Amid profound disagreement about how Western lands and water should be used, she appropriately asks, "How are we to find our way toward conversation?" (*Red* 3) For Williams, story provides the answer, a pathway into conversation. "Story," she argues, "bypasses rhetoric and pierces the heart" (3). Here, readers encounter a central paradox in *Red*. Williams hopes to accommodate conversation by story and apparently believes such an accommodation is possible because story "bypasses rhetoric" (3) Yet, over the course of the book's five essays, she employs rhetoric, using repetition and rhetorical questions, among a host of other rhetorical devices, to represent her relationship to wilderness in America's Southwest deserts. Her claim, then—that story bypasses rhetoric—rests on particular assumptions about rhetoric and its relationship to story and, alternately, to written discourse.

Williams exchanges the word "intellect" for rhetoric in an interview with Jocelyn Barktevius and Mary Hussman. She claims that in "Desert Quartet," one of the essays featured in *Red*, she was trying to respond to the question: "What would it mean to bypass the intellect and feel the words before we understand them?" (75)[5] "Intellect" replaces rhetoric, suggesting that Williams associates rhetoric with reason and logic, which, she intimates, have become detached from feeling, sensation, and experience rooted in the body. As she explains to Janet Bouck Remy, the detachment of feeling and

the body lend a weightlessness to rhetoric: "If we are simply writing out of our heads, there is no weight to our words. They become abstractions that dissipate into the air. This is the realm of rhetoric" (Remy 151). Rhetoric, according to Williams, is an intellectual abstraction, without "weight" because of its detachment from embodied experience (151). In the above quotations, as in her claim in "Home Work," Williams juxtaposes rhetoric with feeling. Unlike rhetoric, feeling, she believes, is intrinsically connected to the body. Moreover, "the body," she tells Remy, "is the realm of story. And it is in story that we bypass rhetoric and pierce the heart. We feel it first and understand it later" (151).

Readers and scholars often use literature as an object of analysis, a rhetorical field in which authors manage rhetoric, rather than bypass it. Williams avoids labeling her work literature, choosing instead to associate it with "story" (151). This decision, in my view, follows from an intuition that literature implies particular modes of production and consumption that *Red* aims to transgress. Her goal, it seems, is not to avoid literature but to confer upon it the modes of engagement that she associates with story, namely its potential to be heard and, as a consequence, bring the body into play and "pierce the heart" (151). Story provokes an embodied engagement with language when it is vocalized, or oral, and Williams observes that oral discourse and story share a historical kinship.

Rooting her conception of story and storytelling in an oral tradition, she claims that she "came to the stories in 'Coyote's Canyon,'" the second essay in *Red*, after finishing "a long inquiry into Navajo oral tradition" (*Red* 4). Originally published in book form in 1989, "Coyote's Canyon" was, in many ways, a follow-up to *Pieces of*

White Shell (1984), where Williams details her experiences teaching on a Navajo reservation. Preceding the publication of *Red* by more than a decade, these earlier works reveal her indebtedness to the Navajo oral tradition. Within that tradition, she claims, story "awakens us to our surroundings," and "it is here, by our participation in nature, that we pick up clues to an awareness of what story *is*" (*Pieces of White Shell* 4, emphasis added). Story *is* inseparable from the place where it is told. The storyteller and listeners are often situated within the story's setting, and consequently, they can participate in the setting.

In "Coyote's Canyon," Williams discerns, the stories of the Navajo "animated the country, made the landscape palpable and the people accountable to the health of the land, its creatures, and each other" (*Red* 4). According to her account of the Navajo oral tradition, present in the landscape, storytellers give "each landform, each significant site…a name accompanied by a story," in the process creating an "intricate and complex cosmology" (4). Both storytellers and their listeners apply this cosmology to the landscape that they navigate, grounding stories in immediate, local places. In the Navajo oral tradition, stories do not merely refer to or represent places; they enrich people's relationships to the localized places they inhabit or travel through.

Precisely because it engenders an intimate relationship between culture and place, Williams sees the oral tradition of the Navajo as providing meaningful examples to "a nation suspicious of nature" (*Pieces of White Shell* 3). The suspicion of nature in the United States, many nature writers suggest, manifests in federal and state government's efforts to put undeveloped land to economic use, as if the relationship between people and nonhuman nature is purely a matter of dollars and cents.[6] According to Japanese

ecocritic Masami Raker Yuki, *Pieces of White Shell* "presents the Navajo way of listening as a possible model for revitalizing environmental sensitivity" (82). As suggested by Yuki's claim that Navajo listening presents a "possible model," Williams is not advising all peoples and cultures to adopt the stories of the Navajo so as to replicate their intimate relationship with nature. Doing so, Williams notes, is equivalent to "drinking another man's medicine" (5). Rather, the Navajo oral tradition provides a paradigm or, as Yuki notes, a "model" for changing "unsound human attitudes toward the environment in this present age" (Yuki 81). Williams argues, "We must create and find our own stories, our own myths, with symbols that will bind us to the world as we see it today" (*Pieces*, 5). In *Red*, she tells stories intended to "evoke a sense of place" (4) in the United States, where the masses withdraw from nature "as the world becomes more crowded and corroded by consumption and capitalism" (6).

In *Xerophilia: Ecocritical Explorations in Southwestern Literature*, Tom Lynch suggests that "in studies of regional writing, the phrase 'sense of place' has become so common as to have become a cliché; it is a phrase that, through overuse and imprecise application, has lost its meaning and potency" (178). Attempting to "rehabilitate" and "salvage" a concept "so fundamental to ecocriticism," Lynch cites Stephen Feld's reminder that place "is sensed not by some vague inexplicable process but through the sensory organs that evolution has devised for our bodies" (178).[7] Echoing Feld, Lynch proposes that writers and readers take "the term 'sense' more seriously than is often done" (178). Katherine Chandler and Melissa Goldthwaite suggest that Williams' writing accomplishes that goal by taking "sense" even more seriously than language: "Williams indicates that she privileges sensory interactions with the natural world over

even her own carefully constructed images" (xiv). Chandler and Goldthwaite are correct that Williams "privileges sensory interactions," but she does not privilege them "*over* her own carefully constructed images" (xiv, emphasis added). Rather, by conveying images of the natural world through an oral mode of storytelling, Williams suggests that, through written text, she listens and speaks and thus engages the sense of sound: "I write to listen. I write out of silence" (*Red* 113). Writing comprises a strain of listening that is motivated by and transgresses "silence"—"out of" signifying a response to silence as well as an attempt to outstrip it. In short, for Williams, telling stories through writing is a necessarily auditory operation.

By definition, "story" denotes a recital of events, as likely to be spoken and heard as written and read (*OED*).[8] While consumers of literature are explicitly readers, interpreting visible marks on the pages of a text and analyzing rhetoric, consumers of stories can be, and often are, listeners engaged in a conversation. In some cases, these listeners interact with the storyteller, interrupting or perhaps redirecting a story with a question, a facial expression, or a gesture. In *Pieces of White Shell*, her first book written for an adult audience, Williams notes, "Story is a relationship between the teller and the listener, a responsibility" (130). The interactive "relationship" between teller and listener highlights the specifically oral characteristics of story, which do not customarily manifest in modern readers' silent reading of literature. Upon establishing this dyadic relationship between teller and listener, story becomes a "responsibility," thus suggesting that storytelling promotes a kind of ethical engagement (130).

Walter Benjamin stresses the significance of ethics to the storytelling of oral cultures in "The Storyteller," claiming that, unlike novelists, storytellers confer

responsibility on their listeners. Storytellers do not explain or interpret their own stories, leaving such responsibilities to the audience. The audience's interpretation determines how useful the story is, whether or not it can productively shape a culture's morals or daily practices. According to Benjamin, every real story "contains, openly or covertly, something useful. The usefulness may, in one case, consist in a moral; in another, in some practical advice; in a third, in a proverb or maxim. In every case the storyteller is a man who has counsel for his readers" (86). For Williams, stories are "useful" to the extent that they spur conversation, for in doing so, they engage readers/listeners in ethical dialogues about the environment, the results of which potentially have an impact on a culture's attitude toward the environment and the daily practices that affect it (86).

As she explains in "Home Work," *Red* attempts "to create both a chronology and collage for the reader, to feel the swell of a *community* trying *to speak* on behalf of wild places that are threatened by development or legislation in the United States Congress" (9, emphasis added). The community's sense of responsibility to wild places corresponds to the readers', as Williams positions them to "feel the swell" (9). This "swell" is an intensification of the relationship between people and the environment that borders on the erotic (9). Her emphasis on communal, rather than individual, responsibility implies that readers not identify themselves in isolation but rather as extended members of morally invested communities. To engender her readers' inclusion in a community, Williams challenges the tradition of silent reading, which functions as an agent of isolation.[9]

Oral Reading and "The Reader's Sensorium"

In *The Spell of the Sensuous*, David Abram explains that "the now common experience of 'silent reading' is a late development…emerging only during the Middle

Ages, when spaces were inserted between the words in a written manuscript…enabling readers to distinguish the words of a written sentence without necessarily sounding them out audibly" (124). Prior to this development, Abram argues, reading was a "profoundly synaesthetic encounter," wherein

> Our eyes converge upon a visible mark, or a series of marks, yet what they find there is a sequence not of images but of sounds, something heard; the visible letters…trade our eyes for our ears. Or, rather, the eye and the ear are brought together at the surface of the text—a new linkage has been forged between seeing and hearing which ensures that a phenomenon apprehended by one sense is transposed into the other. (124)

According to Abram, as a synaesethtic encounter, reading necessitates orality. In written texts, readers encounter "a sequence not of images but of sounds, something heard" (124). Reading does not silence marks, letters, or words rendered visibly but instead "forges" a "linkage" between "seeing and hearing" (124). Before the innovation of silent reading, Abram adds, "to read was necessarily to read aloud, or at the very least to mumble quietly" (124-25). Orality, inclusive of speaking and hearing, was thus a fundamental part of the experience of reading. However, in the highly literate cultures of the twentieth and twenty-first century, few readers discern the synaesthetic potential of reading that Abram notes.

In part, new directions in literary theory during the 1970s and 80s, such as semiotics and some cultural studies approaches, accommodate the practice of silent reading. In *Reading Voices: Literature and the Phonotext*, published in 1990, Garrett Stewart explains that "Recent studies in semiotics have shifted attention from the body of literature to literary and cultural representations of the body per se, to the body as text, an impressed field of cultural signs" (2). According to Stewart, the shift of attention to

"literary and cultural representations of the body" and "the body as text" have resulted in "the continuous inhibition of the oral" so that, even as literary scholars attend to representations of bodies in texts, they often disregard the bodies of readers, which are themselves active in the reading of texts (2). Under the influence of silent reading, the bodies of readers are active only insofar as they enact "a concerted veto of sound," or a "voice suspension" (2). Stewart insists "a merely evoked aurality and an oral vocalizing" underlie the "displacement" and "disenfranchisement" of readers' voices (2). Bemused by the lack of critical attention to the bodies of readers in a discourse so preoccupied with bodies, he concludes,

> The very fact that these somatic implications of reading should have come so slowly to the surface in the course of research devoted to the play between phonic and graphic articulations should serve to demonstrate, for a start, how far the body, the reader's sensorium, has traditionally been kept from the field of literary concern. (2)

Williams' invocation of story rather than literature reflects a now-widespread suspicion, addressed above by Abram and Stewart, that the oral and synaesthetic potential of reading has been quashed, or at least severely tempered in our time. Now that silent reading has become a "common experience," the sounds of language are muted when readers consume literature (Abram 124). According to such an admittedly hyperbolic though nonetheless credible account, the medium of literature privileges the scanning eyes of readers, who search for information without forging a linkage across the senses.

To counteract the suspected detachment of the sensing body from the reading experience, Williams charges her writing in *Red* with an explicitly oral potential. By doing so, she challenges the established practice of silent reading and promotes reading as a necessarily embodied experience, analogous to what Abram calls "prereflexive

perception," which is "inherently synaesthetic, participatory, and animistic, disclosing the things and elements that surround us not as inert objects but as expressive subjects, entities, powers, potencies" (130). Williams provides an example of animistic perception as she describes her encounter with a desert sky in the title chapter of the essay "Red":

> Where I live, the open space of desire is red. The desert before me is red is rose is pink is scarlet is magenta is salmon. The colors swimming in light as it changes constantly, with cloud cover with rain with wind with light, delectable light, delicious light. The palette of erosion is red, running red water, red river, my own blood flowing downriver; my desire is red. This landscape is read. A flight of birds. A flight of words. (136)

Williams' representation of her encounter with the desert is intimate and explicit. The passage is framed by her attempts to fuse desire and her articulation of it with the procession of a sunset, which "changes constantly" the color of the desert she perceives. Cloud cover, rain, wind, and light are perpetually moving (136). These forces assemble around the color red and evoke Williams' desire, which becomes as "open" to change as the space she occupies (136). When she reads the landscape and constructs her "flight of words," Williams uses prereflexive perception for reflexive ends (136).

Writing and reading are always, in fact, reflexive operations, but by employing rhetorical devices that emphatically stress the sonic properties of language, Williams tells readers a story that potentially "bypasses," even as it uses, rhetoric (3). Central among these devices is repetition, which takes shape when she uses anaphora, alliteration, and consonance. Through anaphora, Williams represents the integral motion of writing and reading, which advances when recurrent phrases and motifs are recast in subtly different contexts, as is evident when "A flight of birds" promptly transposes into "A flight of words" (136). Repetition associates "birds" and "words" with flight, but it does not effect a static rehearsal of a particular kind of motion (136). Though both fragments

sound and look alike—only a consonantal sound ("b" and "w") and a pair of letters ("bi" and "wo") distinguishing them—birds do not fly the same as words. Rather, in the representational space that Williams assembles, words fly with and alongside birds, expanding the space of flight.

To create an expansive, inclusive representational space, she utilizes a procession of sounds, repeating and rhyming, in order to render text sonorous—constituted, in part, by sound—and thus parallel the sonority of a material space, the desert, where birds sing and squawk to mark their territory. Williams' use of repetition reflects what Deleuze and Guattari call the "refrain," which is a "territorial assemblage" that "always carries earth with it" (312). Their primary example of the refrain is bird song, for "the bird sings to mark its territory"—in other words, the bird sings to assemble an area that it ranges (312). The bird's territory amasses when it takes flight and sings from positions on other branches in other trees. In the course of this auditory marking of territory, bird song creates "rhythm" that "changes direction" and "does not operate on a homogeneous space-time, but by heterogeneous blocks" (313). That is, there is audible consistency to bird song, but even within that consistency, there is variation that reflects a continuous and "critical" motion in and through space and time (313). For Deleuze and Guattari, "critical" connotes an incompleteness and unpredictability that invite those who conduct or observe "rhythm" to "[tie] together critical moments" as they "pass from one milieu to another" (313). The critical quality of the refrain actuates its "catalytic function," arousing its potential "to increase the speed of exchanges and reactions in that which surrounds it" (348). Williams' use of repetition is "critical" in that it opens her written text—which appears already complete, whole, autonomous—to supplementation

(Deleuze and Guattari 313). When she observes, "This landscape is read," Williams not only admits her interpretation of a material landscape—the "red" desert "is read" by her—but also acknowledges her readers' reactions to the representational space she assembles (Williams 136). These indeterminate reactions potentially enlarge the scope of "landscape" so that it refers, at turns, to the real Southwest desert, Williams' written representation of it, and the readers' interpretations of her written representation (136). To wit, landscape accumulates exchanges between various bodies that render space a process of expansion.[10]

When read aloud, or even mumbled quietly, Williams' passage engenders a particular exchange between Williams and her readers. Readers participate in a conversation, embodying her prose, their tongues directing air to the edge of their teeth as they repeat the sibilant "is": "The desert before me is red is rose is pink is scarlet is magenta is salmon" (136). Likewise, the alliteration engendered by the consonants "c" and "r"—"changes constantly, with cloud cover" and "running red water, red river"—produces an embodied response in readers, concentrated around their mouths (136). The repetition of guttural sounds regulates the movement of their throats, tongues, and lips. By vocalizing Williams' writing, readers activate their mouths, and their bodies come to be affected by her stories about the desert. As a result, text becomes a place where readers can partake in embodied experience.

Williams' production of oral literature—writing that imperatively involves speaking and hearing in the practice of reading—bears on a larger, and in some ways more politically consequential conversation about people's engagement with the wild spaces that her writing represents. The suspected detachment of the listening ears from

the practice of reading correlates to the occasional insensitivity of many humans to the fragility of natural soundscapes, which in recent years soundscape ecologists have marked as a crucial factor in the assault on wilderness ecosystems. More generally, according to Williams, people tend to undervalue the importance of a responsible, embodied, and participatory engagement with wilderness. Urging her readers to rectify their relation to "wild nature," she writes,

> We must take our love outdoors where reciprocity replaces voyeurism, respect replaces indulgence. We can choose to photograph a tree or we can sit in its arms, where we are participating in wild nature, even our own. (111)

Williams' stories encourage embodied participation, rather than "voyeurism" or "indulgence," within the locus of reading as well as within wild nature (111). To unfold the possible connections between writing or reading oral literature and "participating in wild nature," Williams attempts to navigate the challenges inherent in representing the sounds of the wilderness (111). The challenges of representing the sounds of the wild are born of a culture that has become increasingly inept at listening. Williams attributes the distancing of humans from nature, in part, to the visible predisposition of western culture, arguing that "the world we frequently surrender to defies our participation in nature and seduces us into believing that our place in the wild is as spectator, onlooker" (106). Spellbound by the sights of a landscape, observed from scenic vistas and often "from behind the lens of a camera or the window of an automobile," many people have become inattentive to the sounds of the wild and our potential interaction with them (106). This auditory oversight, as I remark above, reflects the shortcomings of silent reading, which produces readers unpracticed at imagining and interpreting literary soundscapes.

Language is not at odds with the senses, or the sensed landscape, particularly

when it is voiced. Orality intensifies language through the sense of sound so that, for Williams, "The relationship between language and landscape is a marriage of sound and form, an oral geography, a sensual topography, what draws us to a place and keeps us there" (136). According to her, language is wedded to landscape when, if not because, it produces sound, creating "geography" that is "oral" and "topography" that is "sensual" (136). Williams wants "to speak the language of grasses, rooted yet soft and supple in the presence of wind before a storm" (19). This language that Williams wants "to speak" stresses motion and malleability; it is "rooted" and "supple" but "soft" enough to respond to the wind (19). Oral and written discourse converge throughout *Red*, as she attempts "to keep [her] words wild so that even if the land and everything we hold dear is destroyed by shortsightedness and greed, there is a record of beauty and passionate participation by those who saw what was coming" (19). The efficacy of that record is contingent upon its production of a particular response in her readers, an auditory performance of her text that makes them participants rather than impassive observers.

Grasping the Voice of the Land

In "Sound Ground to Stand On: Soundscapes in Williams' Work," an essay from *Surveying the Literary Landscapes of Terry Tempest Williams* (2003), Yuki applies "an aural mode of understanding" to Terry Tempest Williams' representations of wild spaces in the American Southwest, as well as to a brief analysis of how people and cultures experience nature in general (84). Along with Williams' acute attention to the sounds of Western wilderness, which evinces what Yuki calls a "paradigm of listening," she concerns herself equally with the sounds produced by her prose (82). From this

perspective, Williams both describes and creates sounds. By interpreting passages from *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Place* (1991) and *Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert* (2002), Yuki teases out some of the implications of Williams' investment in sound, ultimately concluding, "Williams's soundscape descriptions offer a fine example of 'eco-logical' writing in which the voice of the land is listened to, grasped, and articulated" (92).

After listing the names of places in Utah for seven pages at the start of "Red," Williams asks, "What do these places have to say to us as human beings at this point in time?" (68) To respond to this question, she claims to listen to the "voices" that are "being carried inside the canyons by the salamanders, toads, and tree frogs," as well as "the species of turtles, lizards, and snakes who are also living on the Colorado Plateau" (68). Williams' articulation of these voices is hardly faithful to the sounds that constitute the desert soundscape. Here, listening does not produce a detailed account of "the voice of the land" (Yuki 92). Instead, she lists species that contribute to the soundscape and reaches an existential philosophical conclusion: "Wilderness holds an original presence giving expression to that which we lack, the losses we long to recover, the absences we seek to fill" (*Red* 69). "What these places have to say to us" is unclear and relies upon philosophically weighted notions such as "original presence" and "absences we seek to fill" (69). Wilderness and its many voiced species express something, mysterious and beyond articulation, that humans "lack" and "long to recover" (69). Williams does not "grasp" the voice of the land or the desert soundscape, as Yuki suggests, but instead struggles to represent nonhuman voices (Yuki 92).

This struggle is not indicative of Williams' shortcomings as a listener or writer.

Even for a self-proclaimed "caretaker of silence…connoisseur of stillness…listener of wind" like Williams, nonhuman nature remains intrinsically Other, its sounds beyond her grasp (141).[11] Scientists in the field of soundscape ecology, a discipline devoted to studying natural soundscapes in order to measure environmental health, confirm this problem. Equipped with state-of-the-art recording technologies, soundscape ecologists have collected and studied hours upon hours of acoustic data in wilderness spaces and still struggle to represent natural soundscapes so that people understand highly nuanced auditory information. In "Whisper of the Wild," an article about recent advancements in soundscape ecology, Kim Tingley explains, "Defining the resource [soundscape ecologists] want to protect—in words and numbers, to scientists and policy makers—is a fundamental challenge for…soundscape researchers" (45). Musician and naturalist Bernie Krause, who has recorded natural sounds for more than forty years, adds,

> Sound is a medium that's hard to describe beyond its physical properties—frequency, amplitude, timbre, and duration. Yet it plays a key role in the ways societies express themselves; it is fundamental to the collective voice of the natural world, to music, and to acoustic noises of all kinds.
>
> The basic elements of sound are just outside our linguistic grasp, and to most of us sound has always been an enigma. (18-19)

Tingley and Krause alike note that sound is difficult to define or describe.[12] To define or describe this resource, scientists have to explain what natural sounds communicate to humans as well as among the various wildlife species within an ecosystem. Such explanations often require researchers to describe the sounds they listen to, but as Tingley casually remarks, "sounds are remarkably difficult to explain without onomatpoeia" (45). For that matter, even onomatopoeia provides a crude rendering of natural sounds.

For example, take the yip that people often associate with the coyote. In *Animal Dialogues*, nature writer Craig Childs describes his encounter with the coyote's call, first

by recourse to onomatopoeia and then by evaluating the various messages encoded in the sound: "I wake to the yip-yap howl of the coyotes…I listen closely, trying to tell where they are, imagining coyotes at the edge of a forest a mile away, calling from windswept clearings" (41). Upon waking, Childs recognizes the "yip-yap howl of the coyotes," but listening closely, he begins to consider the proximity or distance of the calls as well as their location "at the edge of the forest" or in "windswept clearings" (41). The onomatopoeic "yip-yap" fails to account for distance and environment and perhaps more importantly difference, as coyotes invariably adapt their calls to suit different purposes, such as mating, hunting, and warning (41). Here, onomatopoeia, promoted by Tingley as a potentially effective means of describing sound, falls short of articulating the various messages conveyed by the coyote's yip.[13] Childs augments onomatopoeia by constructing a more evocative narrative, in which he approximates the position of the coyote's call and locates the animal within an ecosystem.

Though sounds and soundscapes are difficult to describe, as indicators of environmental health, they nonetheless provide a valuable resource that merits continued study.[14] By attempting to describe natural soundscapes, Williams and other nature writers who attend carefully to sound practice an auditory sensitivity that reflects the efforts of soundscape ecologists. However, if sound is enigmatic and "just beyond our linguistic grasp" (Krause 19), readers should be wary to believe that Williams, or any nature writer for that matter, effectually "grasps" the voice of the land (Yuki 92). Moreover, insofar as Yuki uses an "aural mode of understanding" to describe a nature writer's superior insight into natural sounds, it is of questionable value to the study of ecology or literature (84). In "What Do Nature Writers Want?" Dana Phillips critiques

the value that nature writers attach to "a nonverbal, sensual awareness of nature," arguing that it indicates "selfishness or self-absorption" that "can dilute good intentions and ethical commitments" (196).[15] By rendering nature mysterious or providing "spiritual insight" about it, nature writers do not provide any useful "understanding" of it (204). To be useful, nature writing should "partake of" or "have an influence on" thought "that is truly ecological" (204). Ecology, according to Phillips, involves "understanding what one sees" and "understanding, and trying to imagine, a lot of what one doesn't see" (204). Understanding nonhuman nature, the presumable endgame for ecologists and nature writers alike, does not follow from "sensual awareness" but through "a viable theory, grant money, graduate research assistants, and lots of laboratory equipment" (204). Phillips seems to presume that nature writing should have utilitarian aims and advance scientific "understanding" of nonhuman nature (204). Such aims and understanding, in his view, are part of the ethical responsibility of nature writers.

Williams' and other contemporary nature writers' focus on sensual awareness is useful nonetheless, I would argue, not because it furthers scientific knowledge about nonhuman nature (though, like Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* or Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, nature writing sometimes achieves this end), not because it reveals a writer's superior insight into nature's mysteries, but rather because it identifies writing and reading as sensual operations in and of themselves. Williams is particularly sensitive to the sensuality of language, proclaiming that she "writes to listen" (113). Writing is "a form of translation" (113) through which she intends to "quicken the heart" and "give courage to…a silence that is heard" (138). As sensual processes, writing and reading occasion interactions between writers, readers, and nonhuman material forms, which

include the substance that writers translate into text as well as text itself. Abram champions this idea of art as a "cooperative endeavor, a work of cocreation," arguing that "genuine art" allows "whatever is Other in the materials to continue to live and breathe"; it enables "the form to emerge from the participation and reciprocity between artist and his materials, whether these materials be stones, or pigments, or spoken words" (278). This account of "genuine art" and "artistry" provides an alternative to Phillips' scientific imperatives and perhaps more aptly describes what nature writers, or at least Williams, want/s (278). Through her particular medium of art, written storytelling, Williams fosters "participation and reciprocity," whereby material forms resonate in aesthetic representations and retain a degree of their living and breathing substance (278).

When Williams does more than merely list places or species, her soundscape descriptions communicate the effects desert sounds have on her. She describes, for example, the sounds of a canyon river in the desert as "Water music. Blue notes, white notes, my body mixes with the body of water like jazz, the currents like jazz" (*Red* 202). The coloration of "notes" reflects the different flows of water, the "blue notes" representing the gentle and consistent flow on a flat section of river and the "white notes" a crescendo of sound as the river descends, creating whitewater rapids (202). Together, the blue notes and white notes create the river's acoustic signature. Immersed in the river's variable currents, Williams likens the river to improvisational jazz music; the water improvises as it makes contact, or "mixes," with her body (202). Even a description as evocative as this one does not overcome the challenge of rendering nonhuman sounds in written discourse. Williams fails to replicate the river's sounds, which are not in any transparent sense "like jazz" (202).

Her representation of the river's sounds is successful as an aesthetic gesture rather than as a mimetic one. Timothy Morton observes that "in trying to evoke a sense of the reality of nature,"

> …many texts suggest, often explicitly, that (1) this reality is solid, veridical, and independent (notably of the writing process itself) and that (2) it would be better for the reader to experience it directly rather than just read about it. (30)

Nature writers employ this rhetorical strategy or device, which Morton calls ecomimesis, "to break out of the normative aesthetic frame" and "go beyond art" (31). Ecomimesis, he suggests, "usually serves the purpose of coming clean about something 'really' occurring, definitively 'outside' the text, both authentic and authenticating" (31). Williams is certainly invested in what is "outside" the text (31)—real desert spaces and their sounds—but her aesthetic rendering of desert sounds forces readers to dwell (on the) inside (of) the text, navigating her "blue notes" and "white notes" and imagining rather than listening to material waterways (Williams 202). Whether or not she grasps the voice of the land—which is outside the text—is ultimately a moot point, particularly for readers of literature, who are not necessarily experts in ecology, soundscapes, or the Southwest desert that Williams knows so well. Her evocation of aurality through writing is plausible, nonetheless, because she draws attention to sound by restoring written discourse's oral potential. Text travels outside via the readers.

The Potential of an Oral Aesthetic

Rather than focusing on the role of the aural (of, relating to, or perceived by the ear) in Williams' work, readers should recognize the extent to which her writing can and perhaps ought to be read as constitutionally oral—that is, as evoking spoken and heard

rather than just written and read discourse. In *Red*, Williams does not represent herself as a mere recorder of aural and other sensory data that manifest in the desert. Instead, she is a mediator of aural experience, consciously employing orality because of its association with aurality.

Aurality describes perception by ear. It has both a physiological and a phenomenological basis. By using their sense organs, a physiological function, people and animals experience a sound, perhaps without immediately assessing its meaning. This moment of reception can be so brief that it is nearly impossible to quantify. Almost immediately, by instinct or as a result of social or cultural conditioning, listeners associate the perceived sound with a catalogue of sounds that they have previously experienced, determining its familiarity or unfamiliarity and responding to the sound on the basis of prior experience. Aurality, in this sense, encompasses reception of auditory information and a subsequent filtering of that information.

Aurality is implicit in orality, the spoken and heard expression of language. When a person speaks, the listener perceives by ear what is spoken. The listener receives the spoken and heard, or oral, information according to the same processes of reception and filtration that apply to aural perception. Orality can function as a particularly acute response to aurality because it fundamentally involves aurality, unlike written representations, which more often than not writers produce and readers consume without generating sound.

By attending to orality rather than aurality, I am stressing, rather than avoiding, the paradox inherent in my understanding of Williams' writing as oral. Oral literature in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries is a substantially paradoxical concept, for

literature is predominately articulated through writing, rather than speech.[16] According to Walter Ong, the materiality or thing-ness of literature, "which essentially means 'writings' (Latin *literatura*, from *litera*, letter of the alphabet)," distinguishes absolutely writing from orality (10). "Writing," Ong suggests, "makes 'words' appear similar to things because we think of words as the visible marks signaling words to decoders: we can see and touch such inscribed 'words' in texts and books" (11). Because of this visibility and tangibility, written words provide a material "residue" in literate cultures (11). Contrastingly, the oral tradition permits "no such residue or deposit" insomuch as "when an often-told story is not actually being told, all that exists of it is the potential in certain human beings to tell it" (11).

For Ong, oral literature is a "monstrous concept" that exposes literate cultures' extreme discomfort with "a situation in which verbalization is so little thing-like as it is in the oral tradition" (11). Oral literature, he claims, is "a strictly preposterous term" that "reveals our inability to represent to our own minds a heritage of verbally organized materials except as some variant of writing, even when they have nothing to do with writing at all" (11). Ong harshly critiques the concept because, in his view, scholars tend to understand orality in terms of literacy, as if it "needs to produce and is destined to produce writing" (14). Orality should be understood on its own terms according to Ong, as a separate mode of discourse, one that requires a physical copresence of a speaker and listener rather than the distance between writer and reader that is characteristic of written discourse. Oral literature has the potential to conflate these two clearly distinct modes of discourse, a possibility Ong clearly apprehends. However, to reject the concept and absolutely distinguish orality from written discourse as Ong does is to ignore the various

ways that writing is enmeshed in and influenced by orality, as well as the ways that orality always already assumes the possibility of reading and writing.[17]

Despite Ong's reservations about the concept, oral literature can be useful to literary scholars who interpret the hybrid constitution of particular works of literature. Williams' *Red*, for example, is first and foremost a written text, but it gestures towards orality through an explicit attention to the sounds produced by particular words, sentences, and passages. When she employs the homophones "red" and "read," the latter in its past-tense pronunciation, Williams urges her readers to consider the divergent meanings of the words as well as their identical pronunciation (136). Not only does she perceive the southwest desert as "red," but she also acknowledges that her perception of color follows from the possibility that "[this] landscape can be read" (136). These words sound identical when spoken aloud. By twinning "red" and "read," Williams emphasizes the cooperative relationship between perception, of the color red in the desert, and language, which involves reading and interpretation (136). Because these words are written and read, however, their difference is apparent. Though they sound alike, "red" is not the same as "read"; similarly, perception is not interchangeable with its expression in writing (136). Orality associates perception and language, while written discourse, in this instance, underscores their difference.

By weaving together orality and written discourse, Williams suggests the sometimes-troubled relationship between perception and writing/reading for nature writers. Many nature writers obscure this relationship by privileging perception and experience in wild nature and denouncing writing as a corruptive and corrosive mediation of experience. Phillips explains, "The bad faith of American nature writing is most

evident in its treatment of its own subject matter, the natural world…as something impossible to address, much less capture in words—even when the words it uses to describe the natural world are in fact wonderfully eloquent and evocative" (218-219). Such a tendency in nature writing is self-defeating. Though nature writing should emphasize nature and experience in nature, nature writers are writers, mediating experience and nature itself through their aestheticized representations of them. Nature writers should not, then, resist the category of the aesthetic but should instead deliberately cultivate an aesthetic that permits them to achieve the particular kind of mediation they aspire to. Such is the case with Williams' cultivation of orality, which engenders an affective relationship between readers and stories as well as, more generally, people and place.

Williams' articulation of oral literature forces readers to decelerate, to be conscious of how—through what aesthetic ploys—*Red* simultaneously positions them at a distance from nature and attempts to broach that distance through orality. The distance readers experience is negotiable and "critical" in a Deleuzian sense, relying upon the "rhythm" of the text, which "is caught up in a becoming that sweeps up the distances between characters, making them rhythmic characters that are themselves more or less distant, more or less combinable" (Deleuze and Guattari 320). When Williams refers to art and story as a "possibility," a "third thing," a "conversation," she communicates the incomplete condition of written text, which necessitates the participation of readers (Jensen 44). For Williams, reading is an extension of speech, and "the organic nature of speech is the confluence of earth and sound. It is spoken and it is read" (*Red* 140). Speech, which implies orality, is a "confluence" or meeting point, where the "spoken"

and the "read," or written, merge rather than divide (140). The liquid implications of the word confluence suggest an indecipherable mixing of minerals (earth) that occurs when two separate streams or rivers meet.

Oral literature's paradoxical status is advantageous to my conception of Williams' work as oral. Paradox depends on a perpetuation of boundaries, a firm division between a concept and its supposed opposite. Williams is invested in challenging boundaries, in using paradox not to maintain division but instead to put opposing forces into dialogue.[18] By imbuing literature with an oral potential, and thus confronting a paradox, Williams challenges a boundary that deafens readers to the sounds of language. The oral potential underlying Williams' writing encourages readers to participate in literature in a manner not possible when they examine written texts as rhetorical information to be analyzed or used for mere entertainment. Williams does not intend her readers to forego rhetorical or critical analysis, but instead advances a conversation between writer and readers that is figurative and rhetorically constructed while also embodied and actualized, as readers vocalize written signs, activating their lungs, throats, tongues and mouths while creating audible sounds. She thus restores our consciousness of the latent and necessary orality of language, as well as to the orality of sound in the deserts of the American Southwest, where species speak in their own tongues and we strain to understand them.

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[1] Abram, David. *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World*. New York: Vintage Books, 1996. 91.

[2] Williams, Terry Tempest. *Red: Passion and Patience in the Desert*. New York: Vintage Books, 2001. 140.

[3] This definition of conversation is from *The American Heritage College Dictionary*, Fourth Edition. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines conversation as an "interchange of thoughts, familiar discourse or talk" and "a public conference, discussion, or debate."

[4] In "The Erotic Landscape," Williams proposes that "being in relation" is a form of "eroticism," an arousal that "calls the inner life into play" and allows people to "form a secret partnership with possibility" (106). Eroticism connotes a participatory relationship, and Williams suggests the erotic is opposed to the pornographic, the latter involving "the limited view of the voyeur watching the act of intercourse without

any interest in the relationship itself" (105). Williams' representation of an "erotic landscape" opens *Red* up to an ecofeminist reading that I do not explore in this essay but certainly has the potential to inform and augment any conception of her work as oral.

[5] *Desert Quartet* was originally published in book form in 1995 and included illustrations by Mary Frank.

[6] Examples abound of American nature writing that critiques federal and state government's interest in wilderness as an economic resource. Two texts worth noting, because of their focus on wilderness in Utah, are Ed Abbey's *Desert Solitaire: A Season in the Wilderness* and Ellen Meloy's *Eating Stone: Imagination and the Loss of the Wild*. Both texts lament the apparent suspicion of nonhuman nature that Williams observes. In "Industrial Tourism and the National Parks," Abbey levels criticism at Park Service administrators who "are themselves believers in a policy of economic development," and suggests that even federal organizations that purport to preserve wilderness partake in its exploitation for the purpose of economic gains (57). Meloy caustically examines the "business" of "wildlife preservation" as she writes about her interactions with sportsmen who hunt bighorn sheep (179). Sportsmen organizations provide financial and political support to government wildlife agencies, which "are addicted to hunter money" (180). The economic foundation of Americans' relationship with wilderness manifests in various contexts in contemporary nature writing set in the West, and nature writers consistently censure institutions' monetary valuation of undeveloped land.

[7] Lynch is paraphrasing Feld's argument in *Senses of Place*, co-edited by Keith Basso (91).

[8] *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines story as "A recital of events that have or are alleged to have happened; a series of events that are or might be narrated."

[9] Benjamin attributes the potential isolation of readers to the rise of the novel, which coincides with the phenomenon of silent reading. He notes, "The reader of the novel…is isolated, more so than any other reader…In this solitude of his, the reader of the novel seizes upon his material more jealously than anyone else. He is ready to make it completely his own, to devour it, as it were" (100).

[10] Gillian Rose's conception of "paradoxical space," articulated in *Feminism and Geography*, also helps to explain the character of the space Williams assembles. Paradoxical space is "multi-dimensional, shifting and contingent," and it manifests when "spaces that would be mutually exclusive if charted on a two-dimensional map—centre and margin, inside and outside—are occupied simultaneously" (140).

[11] Williams does not explicitly identify herself as "a caretaker of silence, a connoisseur of stillness, a listener of wind," but she implies as much when she writes, "Perhaps this is what I desire most, to sit and watch the shifting shadows cross the cliff face of sandstone or simply to walk parallel with a path of liquid light called the Colorado River. In the canyon country of southern Utah, these acts of attention are not merely the pastimes of artists but daily work, work that matters to the soul of the community. This living would include becoming a caretaker of silence, a connoisseur of stillness, a listener of wind where each dialect is not only heard but understood" (141).

[12] Definitions and descriptions, while not inconsequential, are less useful to soundscape ecologists than data that demonstrate short- or long-term changes to natural soundscapes resulting from human impact in the form of development, tourism, transportation, and commerce.

[13] Though Tingley may give onomatopoeia more credit than it deserves, he is right to identify a boundary between human communicative practices and natural sounds. Particularly in verbal discourse, people often fail to translate the complexity of natural sounds. Failures to translate natural sounds create obstacles for researchers trying to gain financial support. However, for nature writers, as should be evident in Childs' description, the boundary between human communicative practices and natural sounds provides nature writers with the opportunity to explore the permeability of that boundary.

[14] Kim Tingley explains that soundscape ecologists are currently developing metrics that will allow them to review acoustic data in order to ascertain whether or not ecosystems are healthy. For instance, noticeable changes in the frequency and volume of songbirds can indicate imbalances within ecosystems, wherein one species adapts to an increasingly loud soundscape while another lacks the physical equipment to adapt and consequently perishes.

[15] Phillips equates a "nonverbal, sensual awareness of nature" to a preoccupation with "mystery," claiming that contemporary nature writing puts nature "startlingly on display—all aglow and awash in mystery—in order to attract our attention and captivate our interest" (190). The celebration of sensual awareness and mystery, according to Phillips, allows writers to avert any responsibility to ecological actualities.

[16] Notable exceptions include poetry readings, audio books, and the oral reading of written texts that occurs in literature classes.

[17] Derrida stresses this possibility in *Of Grammatology*, suggesting that because oral communication has a structure, it pre-supposes the semantic and grammatical conventions associated with written discourse.

[18] In a 1996 essay about *Refuge*, Cheryll Glofelty suggests that Williams challenges traditional boundaries associated with writing natural history, namely a generic division between fiction and nonfiction. Natural history writers share an obligation to scientific observation, a convention of nonfiction, and according to Glofelty, Williams "follows the nature writing path…including close observation and detailed description of birds and their habitat, scientific explanations of avian ecology, and the presentation of qualitative data like rainfall and lake level, all enclosed in a first-person, non-fictional form" (159). At the same time, she uses "the techniques of a novelist," shaping and pacing "the material to resemble the plot of a novel and to reproduce a novel's emotional impact" (160).

CHAPTER 5

MAKING NOISE: BOWDEN'S NARRATIVE CHALLENGE TO THE SILENCE OF JUÁREZ

If you're lost in the rain in Juárez and it's easter-time, too,
Gravity fails and negativity don't pull you through.
~Bob Dylan, *Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues*

Silence, like protest, is the drug of our time, the way we do something by doing nothing.
~Charles Bowden, *Murder City*[1]

Though noise in the environment might be heard as an act of irresponsibility on the part of others, it also supplies a rich encounter for the making of responsibility…
~Brandon LaBelle, *Acoustic Territories*[2]

Commissioned as a gallery installation in 2006 by Art Space San Antonio and now available as a digital online composition, Luz María Sánchez's *2487* consists of the artist speaking the names of 2,487 Mexican migrants who died near the U.S.-Mexican border between 1993 and the time of her project's completion. In her online introduction, titled "Giving Voice to Diaspora," Sánchez characterizes *2487* as "an eight-channel sound piece" that "evolves into an audible terrain where names are generated from

various positions marking the varying directions of movement across the border" (*2487*). From this audible terrain, she voices the names of the dead—some "heard in isolation," others overlapping—and also includes "varying periods of silence" (*2487*). Though much of her introduction underscores how voice operates in *2487*, only through its auditory juxtaposition of oration and silence does Sánchez's composition invite "both moments of contemplation and anxiety with periods of doubt between" (*2487*). Name-calling interrupts silent moments, when listeners wait in anxious expectation for Sánchez to inscribe her voice on a sonic void. In sometimes unnerving ways, voice and silence collaborate in the artist's attempt to produce critical reflection on the often-tragic migration from Mexico to the United States.

Though silence connotes reverence and worship in many contexts, it clearly has a terrifying potential, particularly in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands.[3] Swallowed by large stretches of desert, sounds do not always travel well in the vast open spaces where migrants from south of the border frequently attempt passage into the United States.[4] Upon crossing the border, the first sound undocumented border crossers hear may well be the eerie silence of the desert. Safely reaching American destinations, many successful crossers quietly attempt to blend with their surroundings. Unable or struggling to speak English, some of the recently resettled publicly silence themselves to avoid the attention of Border Patrol-minded watchmen across the country. For those border crossers who meet fatal ends during their trek north, their deaths produce another kind of silence. They disappear, their bodies never identified, their names virtually erased from history.

Against the weight of silence, in *2487*, Sánchez attempts to return the names of some of the dead to history. Her project does not simply promote voice as an auditory

solution to borderland silence. In her vocalizations, names often overlap, and in these moments of overlap, two or more names blur in a polyphony that masks the sounds of individual signifiers. Voice becomes as difficult to interpret, as textured with implied significance, as silence. Through its nuanced performance of voice and silence, her project suggests the possibilities of sound in art that takes as its setting the volatile borderlands between the United States and Mexico.

Silence performs an important, if not sometimes central, role in literature from and about the U.S.-Mexican borderlands. Tucson-based writer Charles Bowden incorporates accounts of silence into his written representations of Ciudad Juárez's recent upsurge in violence. He has reported on the city's post-NAFTA history in a host of articles and books, which include: *Juárez: The Laboratory for Our Future* (1998), *Down by the River: Drugs, Money, Murder, and Family* (2002), and, more recently, *Murder City: Ciudad Juárez and the Global Economy's New Killings Fields* (2010) and *Dreamland: The Way out of Juárez* (2010). These more recent publications—*Murder City* and *Dreamland*—share the recent violent conditions of Juárez as their subject matter, but aesthetically they are quite different texts. They potentially function as companion pieces, each privileging a different sense through which viewers/readers might reflect critically on the city's violence. *Dreamland* combines Bowden's searing prose with the disturbing and beautiful illustrations of Alice Leora Briggs, making it a fundamentally visual text. *Murder City*, which earned Bowden notoriety in the U.S., highlights his interest in aurality, with particular attention to silence and voice. The text is a sprawling, multivoiced narrative characterized by Bowden's uncertainty about how to adequately represent an unfolding history.

Published in 2010, *Murder City* traces a then unparalleled year of violence, 2008, in the Mexican border city Juárez, across the Rio Grande from El Paso, Texas. The number of murders in Ciudad Juárez more than quintupled between 2007 and 2008, with 307 murders in 2007 and an unprecedented 1,623 in 2008. After 2008, the violence increased, with 2,754 murders in 2009 and 3,111 in 2010.[5] According to Bowden, the violence creates "an increase in the volume of their [Juárez's citizens'] tired lives" (7), and it also produces a "silence that graces the city" (35). As these seemingly paradoxical quotations suggest, the text identifies a peculiar concurrence of silence and increased volume in Juárez. The interaction between these unharmonious sound-types reflects Juárez's citizens' everyday struggle with a violence that "is now woven into the very fabric of the community and has no single motive and no on-off button" (105). In the context of the city's violence, silence represents the people's lack of agency, their struggle to resist the conditions that govern their lives and deaths.

Although silence "graces the city," it implies terror, in this case the fear that prevents Mexican citizens and members of the Mexican press from speaking out against the violence (35). According to Bowden, Juárez's silence is "not the silence of the grave or the silence of the church, but the speechlessness of terror" (128). As a response to silence's unsettling intrusion into a presumably noisy urban space, Bowden employs narrative voice to construct an "audible terrain"—the textual Juárez—where he amplifies the city's prevailing violence (*2487*). Bowden's voices return noise to the city, and in this case, noise is not unwanted sound.[6] Instead, it converses with the fear gripping Juárez. Together, silence and noise produce a coupling effect, a sonic effect that Jean-Francois Augoyard and Henry Torgue characterize as "interaction between two sound

phenomena that seem to be distinct yet connected, without being necessarily engaged in a causal relationship" (29). Narrative voice—whether Bowden's voice or his performance of other voices—makes noise and, in so doing, disturbs a silence that he suggests "like protest, is the drug of our time, the way we do something by doing nothing" (36).

Particularly in urban contexts, noise is commonly understood as unwanted sound that, in the words of sound theorist Barry Truax, "loosens the contact the listener has with the environment" (94). According to Truax, noise has accrued historical meaning as "an alienating force" and "an irritant that works against effective communication" (94). Historian Karin Bijsterveld adds, "noise as 'unwanted sound,' whether regular or unpatterned, has often been associated with a disruption of a particular social order, terrifying at times" (37). These definitions present a culturally constructed misunderstanding of noise. Noise is not inherently alienating, irritating, or disruptive, though it might easily become so in particular contexts. Only when listeners have no control over the production and reception of noise does it produce a lack of agency. People can make noise, or manipulate its production and reception, for particular purposes and effects. In a subaltern context, such as Juárez, noise can serve as a source of culture jamming, an intervention in the monologic sounds of a dominant culture. While Bowden is far from a subaltern subject, his book uses narrative noise to transgress the comfortable and familiar, but distant, discourse on the violence in Juárez with language that acutely probes local realities.

With their emphasis on the disruptive effects of noise, Truax and Bijsterveld's definitions more easily apply to Bowden's representations of silence than to his representations of noise. Silence represents the disruption of social order in the city. Yet,

for all of silence's disruptive implications, it is largely responsible for *Murder City's* ability to convey Juárez's occluded, local history to readers. Bowden's readers come to imagine the effects of violence on individual lives through their attempts to understand, even virtually experience, silence.

The Syntax of Silence

Bowden employs silence as a metaphor to characterize Juárez. As a bustling border city-cum-battleground in the War on Drugs, Juárez is not silent or even quiet, and thus silence does not describe the city's actual soundscape. Bowden's use of silence marks a divergence from documentary realism, a representational strategy that, according to some readers, characterizes his earlier writings about Juárez.[7] Documentary realism, evident in *Juárez: The Laboratory of Our Future* and *Chihuahua: Pictures from the Edge*, relies heavily on photographic images, which seem to presume the viewers will not be able to turn away from shocking content—graphic photos of dead bodies and urban waste. Clearly, with its focus on silence, *Murder City* takes part in an alternative strategy, displacing the fixed gaze of the eye with the openness of the ear. Silence is, like documentary realism, a product of the author's spatial imaginary, a means by which Bowden mediates the readers' knowledge of a representational space.

Various forces shape Bowden's evolving spatial imaginary, and central among these is his understanding of Juárez's nodal position in the sprawling network of transnational capitalism. Whereas proponents of globalization might view the city and its disorder as an aberration in an otherwise orderly economic system, Bowden claims,

> Juárez is not behind the times. It is the sharp edge slashing into a time called the future. We have made careers out of studying the Juárezes of the world, given the

> name Third World. We have fashioned schemes to bring them into our place beside the sacred fire and called these schemes development. Each new building with a wall of glass stands as a temple to our ambitions to pour the mash of human life on this planet into one mold. But always, a place like Juárez is seen over the shoulder, some city glimmering in our past, a place we have moved beyond, and now, with a few tugs of our economic ropes, we intend to bring Juárez and its sister cities around the world into our orbit of power and largess. (116-17)

He presents Juárez as a place "seen over the shoulder, some city glimmering in our past, a place we have moved beyond," highlighting the possibility that a distanced and partial view of the city prevents privileged people from acknowledging Juárez's immediacy (117). Safe and warm "beside the sacred fire" of prosperity, the privileged see Juárez as stuck in the past, not of their time, an anomaly in a global economy that draws cities around the world into an "orbit of power and largess" (116-17). Yet, Bowden warns, "the Juárezes of the world" are "not behind the times"; they are "the sharp edge slashing into a time called the future" (116). To warn readers of Juárez's imminence—its quite necessary role in the global economy—Bowden intensifies the silence of the city. What becomes important is not whether or not Juárez is silent, from a historical perspective, but how Bowden's representation of it as such affects readers' proximity to the city's violence.

For Bowden, silence expresses the failures of language to represent Juárez's violence adequately. It resounds in the absence of effective signifiers. Bowden generates an alternate syntax that augments the language politicians, scholars, and journalists customarily use. Silence serves as an organizing principle for this alternate syntax. "Silence," he writes,

> …is my old friend here, a thing that feels like a hand at the throat choking off all sound. It is not the silence of the grave or the silence of the church, but the speechlessness of terror. Words barely form in the mind. And after a while, even

> thoughts lose shape and float like ghosts. Things are explained but the sentences have no subject, only a hint of a verb, and after a while, even the object is a muddled thing…All this is a form of silence. Juárez is a place where a declarative sentence may be an act of suicide. (128-29)

Though Juárez is "the sharp edge slashing into a time called the future," silence dulls its edges (116). Bowden's thoughts "lose shape and float like ghosts" and "words barely form in the mind" (128-29). In this passage, he offers a primer for our interpretation of his book's syntax, particularly the structure of sentences where silence performs as the primary subject, albeit sometimes from a subordinated position.

Consider the following sets of sentences, all from the same page of *Murder City*. Following a description of the January 26th murder of a policeman and his son, Bowden characterizes the public response to the incident: "That is the silence that graces the city. Things happen and no one says much. Then after a while, no one admits the thing even happened" (35). Silence should be the subject of the first sentence. It "graces the city," but it, silence, is oddly subordinated to the indefinite subject "That," creating a sentence with "only a hint of a verb," the linking verb "is," rather than the more meaningful verb "graces" (35). In this context, silence is not, as Blesser and Salter suggest in *Spaces Speak, Are You Listening?*, an "active choice" (32).[8] Silence is, instead, a passive response, without agents. At the same time, it performs in Bowden's sentence as if it is an agent. Although "things happen," the silent reaction to the incident of violence makes it as if nothing happened at all, silence thus erasing activity (Bowden 35).

In the next paragraph, as he considers the absence of any account of the incident in the El Paso press, Bowden adds, "The silence can be a great comfort. Things can be frightening and yet reduced to nothingness by silence" (35). In this example, silence is the agent of the first sentence, but its corresponding verb, "can be," wavers, as if the

effects of silence observed by Bowden are merely speculative (35). In the second sentence, Bowden muffles the agency of silence; it reduces violent events "to nothingness" but does so from a passive syntactical position (35).

Responding to another double homicide, Bowden observes, "Silence. There are two ways to be safe and stay sane. One is silence, pretending that nothing happened and refusing to say out loud what happened" (35). Here, readers encounter one of several narrative instances when Bowden employs "Silence" as a single-word sentence (35). In this instance, it performs as a proper noun and an imperative verb. As a proper noun, "Silence" is a culturally constructed condition, an aural way of being for people in a particular place (35). "To be safe and stay sane," Juárezians have to be silent (35). Early on in the text, Bowden alludes to the name of cartel leader Amado Carrillo's thoroughbred racehorse, Silencio, suggesting the appropriateness of the name, for "[Silence] is a good trait to have in this place" (11). For Bowden, "Silence" merits status as a proper noun because of its acute identification of a cultural condition that is, in part, produced by people like Carrillo who create an intimidating environment in the city (35). Simultaneously, as an imperative verb, it functions as a command to the readers, as Bowden mandates their silent attention. In this connotation, silence acts upon the readers, textually recreating the condition that thousands of Juárezians endure as a part of everyday life.

All of these examples suggest that silence is not merely the absence of sound and the opposite of noise. It does not serve a dichotomy. Instead, it is a dialectical signifier, performing two opposing purposes at once. On one hand, silence represents action. It graces the city, provides comfort, keeps people safe and sane, and controls the readers.

On the other hand, silence suggests the inability of victims to act or have their voices heard. Bowden does not clearly articulate the agents responsible for silencing the city's victims. Instead, silence itself becomes a tenuous agent of violence, acting upon or perhaps against these victims. The real agents of violence, meanwhile, maintain a spectral presence in *Murder City*. They are masked, anonymous men, and silence is the soundless response to their intimidation.

Describing another homicide, in this case of six men "against the wall of a gymnasium in the bright light of afternoon" (169), Bowden deliberately avoids mentioning the killers. "Here is what we can be certain of," Bowden explains,

> Six men line up against a wall, their faces turned to the blocks. Children are playing in the street. There is a settling of accounts about to take place. The men are in their twenties or thirties, they wear jeans of various colors and T-shirts. Except for one guy in gym shorts. Then, the guns fire and now the men lie side by side on the ground. Spent cartridges, at least a hundred spent cartridges from AK-47s and AR-15 rifles and .40 caliber and 9mm pistols litter the ground around the bodies. (169)

Bowden's account of this incident, which includes a description of the victim's clothing and a list of ammunition types, attests to his attention to details. But strangely enough, he omits the shooters in this scene of mass violence. His description reflects a tendency of crime reporting in Mexico to provide "an almost pornographic description of a car or corpse—and silence on the killers" (34). The absence of killers in crime reporting, according to Bowden, "is the sound of the growing terror, this silence" (34). The descriptions that Bowden mirrors turn pornographic by focusing on parts, cars and corpses, at the expense of the whole—a murder scene that ought to include murderers as well as street coordinates, spent cartridges, and lifeless bodies.

After speaking with locals who witnessed the murders, at least by ear, Bowden

sums up their private testimony: “What fills the air is not sirens but this: cries of pain, voices begging for mercy, the roar of guns. Then silence. But this pure and sacred silence is broken by moans and screams. And so more shooting is required. Finally, it is finished” (169). Bowden’s transcription of local testimony renders the scene through its composite sounds. The locals communicate the absence of sirens, accompanied by cries of pain, the roar of guns, and, of course, a “pure and sacred” silence (169). Absence and silence merge with noise and are, perhaps, more disturbing than it. Cries of pain and the roar of guns should invite sirens, but neither ambulance nor police respond to what has transpired.

Neither account, Bowden’s nor that of the locals, would pass for what we often think of as history, lacking as they do an explanation of who murdered these men and why they were murdered. But both accounts, organized around the author’s syntax of silence, certainly add something to a historical understanding of the Juárez of 2008, as well as to a general understanding of history’s content. By omitting the murderers in his description of the scene, Bowden implies history’s inevitable lack, a lack partly indebted to the limits of language. History fails to disclose all possible and necessary facts. In Bowden’s representation of the above homicide, the lack is a quite significant one; the murderers disappear from the scene of the murder altogether. Clearly, Bowden’s omission is deliberate. No, he cannot identify the shooters by name, but, yes, he certainly knows that the guns did not fire themselves. His description of the event highlights the likelihood that some vital detail, however small or large, will escape historical representation.

The locals’ account of the incident, meanwhile, includes aural details. Though

the witnesses to the event might have seen the murder, they only share what they heard. And what they heard is equally important to any thoroughgoing history as names, times, dates, and attempts to explain. The sounds of the murder profoundly influence how people who were there experienced the event. Of course, outside of Bowden's text and a few quiet Mexican sitting rooms, the witnesses' aural experiences become yet another detail absent from history. Bowden's syntax of silence, thus, represents a process of historical erasure.

A Different Kind of Show

Murder City places severe limits on the capacity of victims to communicate their experiences.[9] In fact, the voices of victims figure prominently only when, through a kind of literary ventriloquism, Bowden performs a Juárezian adaptation of *Our Town*, explaining, "it will be a different kind of show with a different kind of speaker. Just bodies, severed heads, bullets, these can attend. It is time to listen and look and feel" (210). The venue for the performance is an abandoned rehab center where several people were murdered, and Juárez's murder victims perform as the townspeople. "The dead," Bowden writes, "sit in rows and wait their turn to speak," introducing themselves in turn, beginning with Ernesto Romero Adame, who was killed on New Year's Day (212). Some performers share their names, while others merely note the date of their murder and the nature of their fatal wounds.

According to this performance, murder victims can speak only through a virtual haunting, the victimized participating in a "quiet performance" where "the street noises…fall away—the backfires from old cars, the rumble of buses, the random gunshots, the shouts, and especially the suffocating sound of all the silence that cloaks the

city after the killings begin" (209). For this quiet performance to take place, the city's sounds apparently must "fall away" (209). Included in these city sounds is the "suffocating" silence that, in death as in life, "cloaks" the voices of victims (209). Bowden presents this silence as but another type of noise, like the backfire of cars and the rumble of buses.

During the performance of the "new *Our Town*," the book's most prominent victim, Miss Sinaloa, a beauty queen and rape victim whose story Bowden weaves throughout the text, sits beside the author in the audience (216). Here, as elsewhere, she occupies *Murder City's* pages as a ghostly figure, more a symbol of the city's violence than an actual person. Her voice is not heard, her victimhood muffled by the city's unrelenting violence. As Bowden explains, Miss Sinaloa is "a product of the city, a testament to the cheap drugs and the expendable lives, and her story will never be in the newspaper, nor will she—or the army that wanders the city and is just like her—ever be counted and considered in the studies and essays about life in Juárez" (31). Bowden's book struggles with what voices can and should be heard as readers attempt to understand the tragic history unfolding in Juárez. The result of this struggle is "a different kind of show with a different kind of speaker" (210). The difference is, in part, a difference between Bowden's representational strategies here and those he employed in earlier efforts to represent the city's post-NAFTA conditions.

Many of Bowden's harshest critics, particularly from the field of Chicano/a studies, have been highly critical of his tendency to communicate an other's history through a documentary realist mode of representation. In her examination of Bowden's *Juárez: The Laboratory for Our Future*, Sandra Soto explains,

> Bowden's portrait of life and death in Juárez is so stunning, the photos/evidence so incontrovertible, and the stakes of bearing witness so high that it is difficult to apprehend his *Juárez* as anything other than at face value (which is to say that it is easy to lose track of his representational strategies and his particular way of understanding what has caused the suffering and how to intervene against it). (425)

Soto's critique, which focuses on the truth-telling role of street photography in *Juárez*, suggests the possibility that Bowden's representational strategies are naïve, for they reproduce "the most insidious dominant frameworks that have created the very suffering that he wants to interrupt," namely the discourse of development (426). According to this critique, by underscoring the disorder in Juárez, Bowden implicitly confers the city's need for continued development, the expansion of global capitalism as a heuristic tool for poverty and disorder. According to Bowden's critics, despite his compassionate liberal agenda, he represents Mexican subjects through a colonialist logic that fails to question the politics of its representational strategies. He travels to Juárez and studies its people, dead or alive, passing on his observations and photographic evidence as if they are impartial. In so doing, he ignores his complicity in what Walter Mignolo calls the "coloniality of power," a conflict of knowledges and structures of power" (16).

In the case of *Juárez*, the "conflict of knowledges" with "structures of power" (Mignolo 16) follows from, according to Soto, his failure to consider that his representational strategies are "necessarily shaped by the social norms of U.S. subject formation" (Soto 427). As a "white, middle-class, heterosexual, male citizen of the U.S.," Bowden has the privilege to "demand that all other humans enjoy his own standards of living" (427). The life of relative order that he is privileged to lead and demand for others engenders "his uncritical acceptance of social norms and the binaries that lend them their traction (privilege/impoverishment, order/disorder, hope/nihilism,

freedom/abjection, and public/private)" (427-28).[10]

Unlike *Juárez*, with its continuous collage of verbal discourse and photographic images, *Murder City* includes only one photograph before the Prologue, a twenty-page insert of black-and-white photographs in the middle of the text, and one photograph after the book's final chapter. It does not privilege visual knowledge, reading as viewing; instead it promotes audile reading, reading as hearing. In his 2003 book *The Audible Past*, Jonathan Sterne applies the term audile to ways of listening that developed with the emergence of sound reproduction technology over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. For Sterne's purposes, the term is useful because "it references conditions under which hearing is the privileged sense for knowing or experiencing" (96). In Bowden's *Murder City*, readers encounter just such a privileging of the sense of hearing. The conditions under which such a privileging arises, in this case, are quite different from Sterne's.

Due to various causes, including the sharp rise and fall of industry and the growth of the narcotics trade, Juárez has become one of the most violent city-regions in the world. In part, the city's violence is easily attributed to the imperialistic dimensions of globalization, its simultaneous production of First- and Third-Worlds. The rise and fall of the maquiladora industry and the expansion of narco-trafficking in Mexico, both accelerated by NAFTA and the flows of transnational capitalism, highlight globalization's corrosive effects on this particular local place. In *Murder City*, as in *Dreamland*, Bowden is quick to point out his own and his readers' complicity in producing the requisite conditions for Juárez's violence via their participation in global capitalism, and the drug trade, as consumers. That complicity is furthered by a proclivity

to obscure the very violence we unintentionally sponsor through "explanations" that "streamline a messy torrent of events" (74). Of these explanations, Bowden observes,

> The Mexicans slaughtered in this killing season get to die twice. First, at the hands of the murderers, and then later, they are killed again by the explanations of their deaths. They are said to die from a cartel war, or from a war between the president of Mexico and the cartels, or a war between the Mexican army and the cartels or possibly as a result of drug consumers in the United States financing evil people with their habits and thus creating the slaughter every time they roll a joint. (74)

He suggests that such explanations are a form of murder, a second killing of the "Mexicans slaughtered in this killing season" (74). U.S. citizens are complicit in the city's violence more so because of their streamlined explanations than the fact that they buy and consume drugs. Their consumptive habits, Bowden argues, are too often used as one among many simple explanations for the violence.

However, Juárez's violence is equally, and more immediately, attributable to local choices and actions. The local reality, according to Bowden, is that

> There are no jobs, the young face blank futures, the poor are crushed by sinking fortunes…Killing is not deviance, it is a logical career decision for thousands floundering in a failing economy and a failing state. (74)

Mexican nationals perform the killing; it is "a logical career decision" for "thousands" of Juárezians and Mexicans (74). Of course, killing is not a "logical" career path no matter the conditions, and here, Bowden reveals his privileged position as an outsider reading and attempting to make sense of the city's senseless violence (74). Yet, the point I would like to emphasize here is the shift between local and global explanations for the conditions in Juárez. Bowden yokes "killing" to "a failing economy and a failing state," as well as a global economic system, but locals choose the career and perform its requisite violence (74).

Continuously shifting between claims of global and local responsibility for the violence in the city, Bowden ultimately attempts to close the distance between himself, his readers, and Juárez through his characterizations of sound. He characterizes Juárez according to what he hears, both the sounds and voices that resonate throughout the city and the silence that encapsulates the response to its current conditions. The city's violence is inherently visible—as the photos, drawings, and descriptions of violence in his other works repeatedly remind us—but to know and experience Juárez as Bowden wants us to in *Murder City*, we must also be immersed in its sounds.

Skittering and Flapping

Bowden's writing features urban sounds, but they are not the sounds readers might expect of a large metropolis. Whereas the readers might expect to hear traffic, sirens, and gunshots, he describes urban sounds that hardly seem noisy at all:

> There is a sound that is everywhere in Juárez, and it is not of sirens or gunshots or the cries of the dead or dying. It is the skittering of litter down a street by a warehouse of death, the flapping of plastic bags caught on barbed wire, on fence posts, on iron bars. The city has this skittering and flapping, and all is wrapped in endless waves of dust and plumes of exhaust pouring out of tailpipes of dying buses carrying workers to endless toil. (93)

The litter and plastic bags responsible for the city's "skittering" and "flapping" accentuate the presence of garbage and waste in the city (93). These sounds, "wrapped in endless waves of dust and plumes of exhaust pouring out of tailpipes of dying buses carrying workers to endless toil," suggest that, though Juárez is an active site of labor and production, its citizens do not experience the prosperity promised by participation in the global free-market economy (93). The only reward for their labor, it seems, is consumption and its corresponding production of waste. The skittering and flapping

convey globalization's absent presence, its production of waste and "endless toil" and its simultaneous failure to produce comfort and safety (93). The sounds produced by the waste and labor mask the nearby presence of a "warehouse of death" (93). The subtle sounds of globalization camouflage local realities, such as the fact that close by murder victims lie buried in an abandoned building. According to Bowden's characterization, Juárez's sounds are illusory and inconspicuous, and thus their meaning needs to be uncovered. To reveal obscured realities, Bowden employs a series of narrative voices that are aggressive rather than suggestive.

Instead of representing noise through descriptions of loud urban sounds, the author transmits it through narrative, his own voice and the voices of his characters. If listeners, or in this case readers, can listen to these voices, they identify noise that is more than unwanted sound. This narrative noise communicates crucial information. In *Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life*, Brandon LaBelle notes noise's expressive potentials, suggesting that though noise "might be heard as an act of irresponsibility on the part of others, it also supplies a rich encounter for the making of responsibility" (82). According to LaBelle, people should actively and critically listen to noise rather than passively accept it because "to continue to engage politically requires an ongoing responsibility for the demands of the other, which may actually make noise a dramatically important platform for renewing political subjectivity and community today" (82). To truly listen to noise is to "engage politically" by considering "the demands of the other" (82). To ignore or merely accept noise, meanwhile, is to see others' demands as inconsequential. In the context of *Murder City*, readers' refusal to at least hear such demands, the text's narrative noise, amounts to their consent for injustice

to continue unchecked. Bowden's narrative noise thus confers responsibility on readers. It transgresses textual boundaries, compelling readers to question their distance from and indifference to Juárez's violence.

Bowden's uncertainty and ambiguity are apparent throughout *Murder City*. In an effort to rationalize the text's tentative hold on narrative order, Bowden explains,

> We are in a place without beginning or end, and all the ways to tell a story fail me and repel me. There are many dead, and they each have a tale. Beyond that, the efforts to explain are to me efforts to erase truth or simply to tell lies. I don't know what is going on, nor do the dead or the living. But there are these stories of the killings, there is the tortured flesh, the individual moments of horror, and I rest on these moments because they are actual and beyond question. (200)

While admitting his doubts about the effectiveness of his writing—"all the ways to tell a story fail me"—Bowden clearly sees value in telling the stories of the dead (200). "[They] each have a tale," and without somebody there to tell "the stories of the killings," the tales might be lost, not even becoming a memory (200).

Bowden, meanwhile, claims to bear witness to events and provides the noise to which readers will hopefully respond. Bowden's voice occupies most of the text with succinct, clinical descriptions of murder scenes next to forceful declarations about the public's failure to recognize the scope of the city's violence. Describing the "first official kill of the season," Bowden writes,

> Ernesto Romero Adame is thirty-three years old on New Year's Day, 2008. He sits in his 2005 black Jetta Volkswagen. Bullet holes mark his neck, throat, and chest as he waits stone dead at Paseo Triunfo de la Republica Avenue. (1)

Following in the tradition of criminal reporting, the narration is sparse. His description of the murder scene stands as its own paragraph, followed by a blank space on the page and then a description of another murder scene: "It is twenty minutes after midnight on Sunday, January 20, when Julían Cháirez Hernández is found dead by gunshot" (1). The

descriptions do not aestheticize violence, nor do they assign meaning or purpose to it. Distance separates the observing subjects, Bowden and by extension the readers, from the objects they observe, the bodies of Juárez's dead. The rhetoric is as "dead" as the bodies it represents (1). The tragedy of these murders would seem to demand greater compassion from the writer, yet, Bowden implies, his training as a crime writer and journalist has not provided him with a more suitable mode of representation. Mirroring the deadpan style of other investigators, Bowden merely describes the dead bodies that begin to accumulate.[11]

Yet, as he proceeds, Bowden overtly distinguishes himself from other writers who tend to explain Juárez's violence by recourse to "code words":

> I am in a tiny minority on this matter. I see no new order emerging but rather a new way of life, one beyond our imagination and the code words we use to protect ourselves from life and violence. (22)

Tinged with prophecy and anxiety, Bowden's language stands in sharp contrast to the "code words *we* use to protect ourselves" (22, emphasis added). For Bowden, these code words include "cartels and drug lords and homeland security," together forming the "gutless language" that "never face[s] that forces are unleashed on the land with names like poverty a fix, murder, and despair" (38). The code words only partially explain the city's recent violence. In fact, according to Bowden, they often obscure the effects of the violence in their very attempt to explain. He sees them as efforts "to keep this extraordinary moment within the realm of order" through recognizable semantic gestures (41). *Murder City's* readers should sense the author's urgent desire to displace the language "we" use with his alternative—a language that expresses "a new way of life, one beyond our imagination" (22). Through blunt, repeated descriptions of violent

events, Bowden's prose attempts to shatter the readers' protection from violence.

As long as writers provide formulaic explanations of Juárez's violence, readers remain safe, protected by their assumption that somebody, somewhere, is managing the situation. Bowden refuses to validate such assumptions, choosing instead to enumerate the dead without comforting explanations. His clinical descriptions of murder victims risk numbing, rather than mobilizing, the readers. Whereas in previous works Bowden has made use of street photography to avoid such an effect, here, he employs silence and sound.

His descriptions of violence are stylistically spare, but he frames them with blots of empty space on the page. Blank spaces between paragraphs and sections create a series of episodes that would blur into each other were it not for the blank moments of textual silence between. Empty text has a visual basis, but it also momentarily silences authorial voice. Bowden's visual silences mark the effects of the violence on him, suggesting that without "code words"—tidy explanations for the daily blood being spilled on Juárez's streets—at times, he can express himself only through silence (22).

"Sentences," Bowden claims, "also cause fear, as does the blank page waiting for words to fall on its white expanse and clot it with stabs at meaning" (77). In part, Bowden's claim is an admission of the apprehension involved in the writing process, including as it so often does a struggle to generate meaning through words and sentences and then a subsequent marking, or stabbing, of the page. As the words "fall" on the "white expanse," Bowden creates meaning, but he also supplements the blank page, which conferred his uncertainty (77). With each subsequent stabbing, words and sentences blur into each other, creating what Derrida calls a "sequence of supplements,"

an "infinite chain, ineluctably multiplying the supplementary mediations that produce the sense of the very thing they defer: the mirage of the thing itself, of immediate presence, of originary perception" (157). To produce more text is to bury "the thing itself" (157)—for Bowden, "the individual moments of horror" that are "actual and beyond question" (Bowden 200)—under a "sequence of supplements" (Derrida 157). Bowden suspects that, as words and sentences accumulate, he travels farther and farther afield from what is, for him, "actual and beyond question" (Bowden 200). The multiplying effects of supplementary mediation, however, underscore rather than obscure the reality Bowden represents, for in Juárez, "the bodies all blur. The killings merge into one river of blood" (159). The blurring of bodies into "one river of blood" echoes Bowden's apprehension about the production of text (159). He does not want the bodies or his sentences to blur, believing each of them to be significant.

In a different way, sentences and the blank page potentially cause anxiety for readers. Well-crafted writing controls their experiences to varying degrees. In *Pictures and Tears*, James Elkins explains that viewers of paintings throughout the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have tended to respond rationally and academically, rather than emotionally, to artwork. Such responses resist the boundary-breaking potentials of art: "If they are given the chance, pictures can ruin our stable sense of ourselves, cutting under the complacent surface of what we know and starting to chafe against what we feel" (208). Art that invites participation and involvement on the part of the viewer/reader/listener is met with anxiety because it threatens to make them "feel" (208). Detached responses to artwork are safer because the audience can simply access data that confirms "what we know" (208). For his part, Bowden eschews "what we know" by

inviting his readers to "feel" anxious about what they do not know (208). The blank spaces on the page invoke Bowden's and the readers' silence, "cutting" the spatial boundaries that separate them from Juárez's violence (208). In claiming "sentences also cause fear," Bowden implies his text's primary goal—to express his own distress and induce readerly distress through prose and its stylized arrangement on the page (Bowden 77).

Getting in the Car

Other voices, besides Bowden's, contribute to his discomforting prose. True to the journalist's craft, Bowden discloses the voices of Juárez's citizens. Two such voices include El Pastor and the Murder Artist. Their voices do not provide a clear understanding about life on the border. El Pastor is a priest who runs a mental hospital on the outskirts of the city. He tells Bowden, "I know it is dirty and very violent but I love it! I grew up in Juárez. I love it. It is a needy city and I can help my city" (100). Shortly after his conversation with the priest, Bowden interviews a man he calls the Murder Artist, a one-time assassin for the Juárez cartel who has found Jesus and, at least physically, abandoned his life of violence.[12] The man is in hiding from the criminal organization that employed him and meets covertly with Bowden, sharing details about his life as a professional killer. The Murder Artist, as Bowden explains, began his career as "a gofer for the state police" and then served as a bodyguard for the governor of Chihuahua before joining the ranks of the cartel (50). He does not profess a love for the city, instead communicating to Bowden, "I will tell you horrible things" (138). Over the course of the book, the Murder Artist reveals just how easily an average citizen becomes

a professional killer. He is a man who not only kidnapped, tortured, and murdered people for money but also admittedly took pleasure in his violent acts. El Pastor's optimistic enthusiasm for the city is confounded by the Murder Artist's narrative of compromised morality. Bowden's readers must learn to navigate between conflicting narratives about life in Juárez.

Elsewhere, Bowden represents the city's voices through a hybrid blend of his own voice and real people, like the Murder Artist, who he has come to know. In *Murder City's* prologue, subtitled "Get in the Car," readers immediately encounter one of Bowden's imagined, hybridized voices. A narrator opens the text, speaking in the imperative mood,

> Here's the deal.
> We're gonna takes us a ride.
> Now be quiet.
> Time's up, you gotta ride.
> We brought the duct tape—do you prefer gray or tan? No matter, get your ass in. (ix)

With these abrupt and colloquial opening lines, horizontally framed by strikes of the tab and return keys—another visual instance of textual silence—the narrator initiates a virtual abduction of the readers. The narrator is a hybridized voice, Bowden here taking on the persona of a narcotraficante, or drug trafficker. Positioned at the start of the text, the narcotraficante asserts immediate authority, attempting to render readers powerless. The empty horizontal space beside each line reproduces a space where readers—the narrator's hostages—might interject, but the imperatives deny verbal response. The narrator asks a question without concern for the readers' response; "no matter" what color duct tape they prefer, the narrator will bind their hands and seal their mouths (ix).

Readers, obviously, will recognize their abduction as an illusion. Nonetheless,

the readers' implied submission structures their entire experience with the text. Their compliance reflects Bowden's observations about everyday life in Juárez, where, "This is part of basic Mexican schooling: submission" (86). Written texts, to varying degrees, control readers, but they rarely announce an aim to hold readers hostage. By their choice to listen to Bowden and his narrator, readers become acutely aware of their silence and the futility of their resistance to the text's narrative voices. For the book to induce a fear even remotely analogous to what exists in Juárez, its readers must want to resist but have no recourse to action. By involving the readers in a virtual kidnapping, Bowden is refusing to permit their indifference.

The opening narrator's forcefulness places readers in Bowden's Juárez, a particularly violent site in what the author elsewhere calls "the new geography, one based less on names and places and lines and national boundaries and more on forces and appetites and torrents of people" (*Dreamland* 138). To understand this "new geography" of "forces and appetites," an affective geography, Bowden's readers must learn to listen to—or develop an appetite for—the voice of a narcotraficante as if they were his victims. They must accept a passive and silent position in relation to the narrator (138). Such a position reflects the silence that, according to the author, so many Juárezians endure. The opening sequence of the book, thus, sets up a metaphorical equation, the text-reader relationship paralleling a criminal-victim relationship. The historical murders and kidnappings happening in Juárez, under the terms of this metaphor, become accessible to—and, in fact, compulsory for—the book's readers as they become virtual victims, along for the ride.

When the readers get in the car with the narrator, they agree to "be quiet" and

listen to the text and its voices (ix). Effectively, Bowden establishes a contract between text and audience, whereby *Murder City* will interrupt the readers' incomprehension of the Juárez of 2008. Though border-related violence has garnered recent attention in the popular media, the readers are likely shocked by the scope of the violence in Juárez. Bowden wrote much of his book in 2009, when most of what was being publicized about the U.S.-Mexican border, at least in the U.S., revolved around Homeland Security and potential threats of border insecurity to American citizens. His book consequently addresses a gap in understanding the impact of border unrest on Mexican nationals in city-regions like Juárez. Bowden confronts the assumed half-knowledge of his readers with the intimidating narcotraficante of the book's prologue.

The interplay between silent reader and violent narrative voice produces apprehension. Through a literary medium, the readers listen to the narcotraficante's voice, and Bowden expects them to be affected by what they hear. From a safe distance, readers, enrolled in Bowden's program of forceful education, will learn more about Juárez and victims of violence through their participation in a metaphorical kidnapping. By taking the readers hostage, the text implicates and involves them in the city's violence. And by participating, the readers allow the text to permeate the boundaries between themselves and a distant material reality.

To Act and Be Acted Upon

To understand any local or regional history, a culture needs writers like Bowden who express individuals' localized sensory relationships to place while also situating them within global, geopolitical processes. As a starting point for his literary rendition of

Juárez's recent history, Bowden acknowledges, "something has changed inside, something in a deep part, near that place we can never locate but often claim is the core of our being" (*Murder City* xii). What has changed, it seems, is how the author registers a historical process driven by "forces and appetites" (*Dreamland* 138). Though a global perspective certainly has its place and time and is important to Bowden, locally embedded sounds provide more immediate access to a day in the life of a Juárezian than the detached "code words we use to protect ourselves from life and violence" (22).

Murder City's composite sounds demand critical listening as silence and noise blend into each other, challenging readers to make sense of what they hear. "An Inventory of Shimmers," Seigworth and Gregg's introductory essay to the *Affect Theory Reader*, argues that affect "arises in the midst of in-between-ness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon" (1). This "inbetween-ness," the capacity "to act and be acted upon," is precisely the type of experience with Juárez that Bowden's audile writing promotes (1). *Murder City* silences readers, acting upon them, but it also implicates them in the city's violence, activating a virtual phenomenological encounter. Readers associate their own silence with the silence that people experience every day in a city where violence has "become part of the ordinary noise of life" (324). His writing engages readers through silence and voice, and sound becomes necessarily involved in their attempts to understand Juárez's violence.

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[1] Bowden, Charles. *Murder City: Ciudad Juárez and the Global Economy's New Killing Fields*. New York: Nation Books, 2010. 36.

[2] Labelle, Brandon. *Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life*. New York: Continuum, 2010. 82.

[3] In "Noise and Silence: The Soundscape of Spirituality," Hillel Schwarz associates silence with modern spirituality: "between 1860 and 1930, silence came to be seen newly central not to institutional religion or practical theology per se but to spirituality. Beset by the noisiness of the world at large, people began looking and listening for respite to the World Beyond" (8). He adds, "The experience of something

'spiritual' was implicitly a speechless experience; to be 'spiritual' was explicitly to seek, and to be, quiet" (9).

[4] Luis Alberto Urrea presents a different account of a U.S.-Mexican borderlands soundscape in *The Devil's Highway*, suggesting that the Sonoran Desert is a disturbingly noisy place: "Weird sounds in the landscape: voices, coughs, laughter, engines. It was the desert haunting they'd been hearing all along. When they heard the engine coming, it sounded like locusts flying overhead, cicadas, wind" (14). Urrea is describing the experience of Mexican border crossers, who travel across the Devil's Highway, a dangerous path across the Sonoran Desert into the United States. The sounds he documents are a mix of natural and man-made sounds, the engine of a Border Patrol vehicle sounding like the noise of cicadas. All of these sounds reflect the terrifying experience of traversing this stretch of desert.

[5] Since 2010, the annual murder totals in Juárez have decreased, though violence there continues at an alarming rate. According to statistics collected by Molly Molloy, a researcher at New Mexico State University who focuses on Juárez's violence, in 2011, the total number of murders was 1,976. As of September 2012, 681 murders were reported, down from the 1,571 murders reported at the same time of the previous year. Bowden explains that these numbers are not 100% reliable because many murders go undetected, and he highlights this reality through his investigation into the "House of Death" in *Dreamland*.

[6] Schwarz dates the identification of noise as unwanted sound in western culture to the period between 1860 and 1930, observing that "the cultural resonances of sound…were undergoing…determinative changes" during this period and the "most profound of these changes…was a change in the very notion of noise" (6). Previous to this period, he suggests, "noise had been defined vaguely as the failure of certain tones to cohabit peacefully," but during the rise of modernity, "it would be defined psychologically as unwanted sound" that were of "[modernity's] essence" (6)

[7] Sandra Soto forwards the association between Bowden's writing and documentary realism in her article, "Seeing through Photographs of Borderlands (Dis)Order," where she claims, "For Bowden, the only way to interrupt the social and economic degradation of Juárez is to finally make Americans *see* the suffering in its most embodied form, a kind of vision, he claims, that no social science indicators or academic theories of globalization can afford" (423, Soto's emphasis).

[8] Blesser and Salter claim, "Silence is far more than absence of sound, a definition that considers only the physical properties of sonic vibrations. Rather, silence may be understood as an active choice by the creators of acoustic arenas: the occupants and the architects. The absence of sonic events—silence—is important because it leaves the acoustic arena available for low-level sonic events that add nuances to communications. Silence creates larger acoustic arenas as a common resource, whereas loud sound consumes that resource. Only the highest-quality acoustic arenas, with very low background noise, communicate silence" (32). While their claim that silence "is far more than absence of sound" is credible, their definition of silence relies on a dichotomy between silence and "loud sound" that Bowden's *Murder City* confounds.

[9] Other writers examining Juárez, like Cecilia Ballí, remind us that its citizens do not passively accept violence in their communities. For a representative example, see her article "Calderón's War," published in the January 2012 issue of *Harper's*. As I understand Bowden's representational strategies in *Murder City*, his silencing of victims is a strategic choice, meant to represent the various ways that victims have been excluded from public discourse.

[10] In *Border Matters*, Chicano/a scholar José David Saldívar levels a similar criticism against nonfiction writer Luis Alberto Urrea for his book *Across the Wire's* failure to "acknowledge that forms of imperial dominion have often been concretized in the persons and functions of the traveler, especially the missionary and the anthropologist" (139). Saldívar sees Urrea performing as an evangelical autoethnographer, simultaneously compassionate for dispossessed Tijuanans and thrilled by his encounters with them.

[11] Steve Tatum's concept of "forensic aesthetics" provides another way to think about the deadpan style that Bowden employs. In "Spectral Beauty and Forensic Aesthetics in the West," published in *Western American Literature* 41.2, he explains, "the word 'forensic' essentially refers to the investigative quest that follows an extended human encounter with evidentiary traces, the discovery of which transforms physical space into an enclosed, cordoned-off topography of ruin or degradation. 'Aesthetic,' in this context can refer…to a particular kind of human attitude toward…the handling of the material residue or artifacts at the scene of the crime" (129). Bowden's handling of evidentiary traces, the descriptions of murder scenes, reveals a detached aesthetic that his text works to overcome.

[12] Bowden first wrote about the Murder Artist in an article for *Harper's*, titled "The Sicario." Sicario roughly translates to "assassin." In collaboration with Molly Molloy, Bowden edited his autobiography, *El Sicario: The Autobiography of a Mexican Assassin*, published in 2011 by Nation Books.

CHAPTER 6

MODULATING KEYNOTES: THE INTENSIFICATION OF PLACE IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

God save the child who rings the bell
It may have one good ring baby, you can't tell
One watch by night, one watch by day
If you get confused listen to the music play
~Hunter/Garcia, *Franklin's Tower*

Echoes of Local Place in Global Space

In his account of critical regionalism, Neil Campbell notes that this "reconfigured regionalism" places "more emphasis on the borders between the emergent and residual than on the quest for reconciliation or the refuge in the one over the other" (43). My dissertation has examined literary sounds that traverse the borders of the personal, the local, the regional, and the global, producing "emergent" ways for scholars to think critically about mobile places in the literature of the contemporary West (43). Literary sounds pass through the gaps between various spatial scales, as howls, to use an example from my analysis, begin in the electric minds and bodies of wolves and travel up to six miles, crossing through local (the Parham ranch) and regional (the U.S.-Mexican borderlands) places and finding the ears of a human listener, Billy Parham, who

repurposes the sound.[1] During the sound's travel, it gathers residue from each spatial scale, including the global scale.

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, globalization has been imagined by writers like Sherman Alexie and Charles Bowden to impose a rigid order (or disorder) in local places. A top-down system of globalization, controlled by powerful politicians and financial investors, limits the potential of many people and cultures to produce the places they desire. This system benefits those who are privileged enough to stand "beside the sacred fire" and—because of their race, gender, or economic status—enjoy the "power of largess" in a global order structured by capital and the exchange of commodities (Bowden, *Murder City* 116-17). Yet, according to the literary sounds I have considered, the global scale does not absolutely control the production of place. Rather, it leaves a residue that people incorporate into their production of place at the local and regional scales. Transnationalism, for example, is a phenomenon of globalization that Alexie's Marie Polatkin repurposes at the urban powwow, using it to "weave networks of relationships" between Native Americans "across great distances" (Ramirez 2). The drumming at the powwow catalyzes a process of globalization from below, in which Native Americans produce a local, Native place within an urban space designed to facilitate commerce.

Globalization from below, according to Krista Comer, is enacted through "everyday regionalisms, structures of feeling and doing that get articulated through the performance of regional vernaculars" ("Everyday Regionalisms" 36).[2] Literary sounds transport everyday regionalisms, echoing the potency and vigor of the personal, local, and regional within the global. Alexie, McCarthy, Williams, and Bowden articulate

literary sounds through "regional vernaculars," which loosely structure the soundscapes in their work (36). The common thread that runs through these writers' regional vernaculars is their articulation of exchanges between a diverse set of voices within Western places. That is, the regional vernaculars in contemporary western writing are not composed of singular voices—for example, the gravelly voice of a white, male protagonist who wishes, like Presley in Norris' novel, to construct a rooted narrative about the West. Rather, the regional vernaculars are collective and disjunctive assemblages of voices with "different disruptive energies" (Campbell 62) that help western writers examine the "everyday artifacts and the structures of a dynamic and changing social landscape" (Campbell 64). The interactions between these voices enliven the transformative potential of places in the West while also marking the conflicts that oftentimes forestall dialogue or negotiation.

According to Campbell, the intensification of the local and the regional within the global stimulates "negotiations," which are crucial to "a more critically aware version of regionalist sensibility" (43). Literary sounds are instruments that drive negotiations across spatial scales, preventing any one voice from controlling the production of place and space. The negotiations underway in the texts of Alexie, McCarthy, Williams, and Bowden demonstrate that globalization—as imperialism, increased mobilization, or the accelerated exchange of information, commodities, and capital—does not determine people's sense of place. By attending to negotiations between the personal, local, regional, and global, a critical regionalist paradigm avoids, what José Limón calls, "a too-easy globalization of [texts] that [are] fundamentally concerned with a specific local situation over long historical time" (164).[3] Limón argues that critical regionalism is

"simultaneously a theory, methodology, and praxis for recognizing, closely examining, fostering, but also linking cultural and socioeconomic localized identities, especially those that stand in antagonistic, if also negotiated, relationships with late capitalist globalization" (167). Throughout this dissertation, literary sounds have repeatedly energized "an abiding and fulsome respect for and rendering of the complexity of local cultures in comparison to others in the world, while recognizing that all are in constant but critical interaction with the global" (168). My work proposes literary sounds as affective, transformative tools that assist writers in their efforts to salvage personal, local, and regional knowledges in the face of accelerating globalization. The particular sounds I consider—the beating of drums, the howls of wolves, the latent orality of written text, and the silence of Juárez—should not be thought of by literary scholars as the definitive sounds of particular Western places, but rather as transitory sonic markers of place. Certainly, some sounds endure the effects of historical processes and resonate as keynotes, sonic anchors, over long periods of time. However, if we interpret these keynote sounds as constant, then we are refusing to observe their continuous modulation and transformation, which are central to the intensification of place that they quicken.

Sound the Alarm

R. Murray Schafer explains that keynote is "a musical term" describing "the note that identifies the key or tonality of a particular composition":

> It is the anchor or fundamental tone and although the material may modulate around it, often obscuring its importance, it is in reference to this point that everything else takes on its special meaning. Keynote sounds do not have to be listened to consciously; they are overheard but cannot be overlooked, for keynote sounds become listening habits in spite of themselves. (9)

This dissertation has examined "keynote sounds" in several works of contemporary Western American literature that foster "listening habits," providing reference points by which readers may reach a tentative understanding about particular places in the American West (9). Yet, in contrast to Schafer's claim that "it is in reference to this point [the keynote] that everything else takes on its special meaning," I have been arguing that these sounds not only "anchor" relationships between people and places but also loose energy and potential (9). By listening closely to literary keynote sounds, readers can recognize the multiple and mobile forces that shape relationships between people and places as well as the different ways of perceiving that people develop to register those forces. Relationships between people and place are continually changing, oftentimes in response to or in collaboration with modulations in the sonic environment. When keynote sounds change, people have to adopt new ways to navigate their environment, or else they will end up confused or lost, unmoored, without an anchor, without perhaps an identity.

Addressing a keynote sound in nineteenth-century France, Alain Corbin argues that village bells inscribed people in a particular time and place, constructing the identities of individuals and communities in the French countryside. Over the course of the 1800s, as the political power of the church ebbed and flowed, local, state, and federal governments often took control over the ringing of bells, if not at least keeping it "constantly under surveillance" (xx). Corbin observes, "One of the defining characteristics of the period was a concern with general regulation, bells being a prime target" (xx). In his Campanarian history of nineteenth-century France, he charts transforming relationships between people and place in French villages, arguing that

national efforts to regulate the lives of Frenchmen and women during this century led to the collapse of particular "modes of attention" that organized communities on the local scale (xx).[4] As bells fell silent and a new "panorama of sound" emerged at the end of the century and into the twentieth century, communities in the French countryside had to discover new "signs, portents, or talismans" as "symbols for their identity" (307). These new symbols were often communicated through written texts as "posters, printed summonses, the dials of private clocks, and calendars gradually ensured the predominance of the visual" (307). The increasing use of written texts in French villages did not eliminate the power of auditory information to organize communities, for it coincided with the development of "the steam engine and its puffing…the electric motor, the siren," which mobilized villages and connected people and communities across great distances through noisy modes of transport (307). Though Corbin concludes that the "amplifiers" of the twentieth century "wrested from the peal of bells its monopoly of solemnity," I sense that the mechanical sounds of the next century are extensions of village bells, immersing people in soundful places (307). During the twentieth century, after most bells had fallen silent, people discovered new sounds to help them find or lose their ways—voluminous and amplified sounds that seemed capable of turning night to day.

Mechanical sounds are equally as meaningful to twentieth- and twenty-first-century places as bells were to nineteenth-century French villages, but people often perceive them as noise because they do not believe they have control over their production.[5] Gone, they suspect, is the child elected by her community to ring the bell, to mark the events of the day, the season, the year. Arrived are the machines of industrial

and commodity cultures that displace local sounds with an automated, mechanical din. These suspicions, hyperbolic as they are, ultimately feed our occasional tendency to mute the sounds that still ceaselessly cry out within local and regional places in response to and collaboration with the noise of globalization. At times, we respond silently to this noise, as Bowden suggests Juarezians are sometimes compelled to do or as Williams does by choice in the Southwest desert she worships. As Saldaña-Portillo suggests in the essay I briefly examine in the introduction, people are always responding to the noise of globalization, but as outsiders to any particular local community in which those responses are voiced, we do not always have the ears to hear their nuanced assertions of the personal, local, or regional within the global. In response to Corbin and Saldaña-Portillo's historical arguments, in this final section, I roll away from literary sounds and consider the resonant sounds of the twenty-first-century West, which policy makers and scientists have been increasingly attentive to in recent years. Their efforts to study and, in some cases, preserve the sounds of particular Western places reproduce western writers' intensification of local and regional place within a global context.

The Dynamism of Sound in the Twenty-First Century West

In *Anthropology of Turquoise*, Southwestern nature writer Ellen Meloy posits, "Color is the first principle of Place" (16). Her work is deeply committed to the places she loves, namely the redrock Utah desert and soaring granite Sierra Nevada Mountains, due in large part to their visual beauty. Examining her own experience with the "dense evolutionary path toward vision—toward color vision—as we know it," Meloy celebrates her beloved Western landscapes by rendering their colorful places, animals, and people in

writing (8). Her work's focus on the magnificently visible West reflects the long tradition of representing the West through image and sight. Such a focus makes sense in a region with expansive vistas, looming mountain ranges, and otherworldly natural architecture. Even in 2013, well after development has profoundly altered its physical contours, much of the West remains a place for the eyes to behold. To see Western places is to know something, sometimes indescribable, about them. This intuition often guides cultural production from the West—literature, film, and visual art—as well as its consumption and interpretation.

Despite this emphasis on sight in the West, sound palpably influences people's conceptions of Western places, and this influence is apparent in cultural production as well as in scientific and regulatory discourses. In iconic Western landscapes, such as in Zion National Park and the Grand Canyon, the National Park Service has implemented soundscape management plans in response to system-wide surveys that indicate visitors' interest in the unique sounds of these places. According to Zion National Park's Soundscape Management Plan (SMP), a 1995 survey of park visitors "revealed that nearly as many visitors come to national parks to enjoy the natural soundscape (91 percent) as come to view the scenery (93 percent)" (1-2).[6] These natural soundscapes provide "the ability to hear clearly the delicate and quieter intermittent sounds of nature, the ability to experience interludes of extreme quiet for their own sake, and the opportunity to do so for extended periods of time" (2). Shaped by the climate, geology, ecology, and physical contours of the Colorado Plateau, the soundscapes of Zion and the Grand Canyon are distinctly Western. As the SMP for Zion indicates, they are also subject to change—"increasingly, even those parks that appear as they did in historical

context do not sound like they once did" (2)—and thus necessitate "soundscape preservation and noise management" programs implemented by the National Park Service (NPS) (2). Such efforts are designed to achieve "the NPS mission of preserving park resources unimpaired for the enjoyment of present and future generations" (2). Because soundscape management plans promote appreciation for sounds and their effects, and protect "acoustic conditions for wildlife" in order to ensure "healthy and dynamic ecosystems," I am inclined to support them (2). However, the language of Zion's SMP reveals a somewhat misguided conception of twentieth- and twenty-first-century soundscapes.

Though the NPS can and should attempt to limit the impact of human sound and noise on natural soundscapes, it cannot and should not try to preserve "unimpaired" soundscapes (2). Sounds are the product of "dynamic action" (Blesser and Salter 15), and the only way the NPS can preserve unimpaired soundscapes is to restrict action, which would of course render action no longer dynamic. The approach of the NPS to soundscape management is thus quite similar to Schafer's conception of soundscapes. The soundscape, according to both, is similar to a musical composition that people can orchestrate, or organize, in order to effect particular ends—in the case of soundscape management in the National parks, "the enjoyment of present and future generations" (NPS 2). People's tendency to treat soundscapes as musical compositions, according to Douglas Kahn, becomes prevalent when phonography and other recording technologies allow humans to capture and engineer sounds.[7] In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, these technologies have led to the production of innovative music, the introduction of sound to cinema, the opportunity to study sound at a remove from its

source, and an increased attention and awareness to sound as a communicative force. But they have also occasioned our neglect of the interactions that sounds and soundscapes make possible when humans do not consciously organize or manipulate them.

Soundscape ecology comes a step closer to incorporating the interactive and dynamic qualities of sound into its study of soundscapes. This relatively young field uses advanced audio recording equipment to capture soundscapes in their natural states, when human presence and impact is limited, as well as in moments when airplane or automobile traffic interrupts the regular procession of sounds.[8] By accounting for and studying the dynamic interactions between various sounds—rivers, streams, the wind, human voices, jet engines, etc.—soundscape ecology retains the unique characteristics of sound, most importantly its capacity to change from one moment to the next and its tendency to produce a complex web of affective relations within a place. The development of this discipline suggests that people are becoming increasingly attuned to the dynamism of sound and the multiplicity of interactions that it announces and stimulates. In years to come, the sensitivity of soundscape ecologists to this dynamism will likely, and hopefully, affect the National Park Service's approach to soundscape management as well as the rhetoric park management uses to cultivate appreciation for sound among park visitors.

Locations in the American West have provided the setting for a number of studies in soundscape ecology. Kim Tingley's article "Whisper of the Wild" begins in central Alaska, where David Betchkal, Denali National Park's physical-science technician, assembles a recording station "to collect an intangible, invisible and—increasingly—endangered resource: natural sound" (44). Though Tingley at first seems inclined to

present Alaska as a final frontier for natural sound, with the bearded Betchkal as the rugged frontiersman, he quickly notes that Denali is not the "natural haven" for unadulterated sound that we might imagine it to be (44). Over the course of ten years, Betchkal and his colleagues collected a month's worth of acoustic data from more than sixty locations in the park and recorded a total of only thirty-six days "in which the sounds of an internal combustion engine of some sort were absent" (44). The findings of the study in Denali show that even in remote locations in the American West natural soundscapes are changing, prompting Tingley to infer that "humans have irrevocably altered the acoustics of the entire globe" (44). By choosing to designate the changing acoustics of earthly space irrevocable, Tingley replicates the mistakes of soundscape management plans, which present natural soundscapes as static rather than dynamic.[9] Changes to soundscapes are often quite revocable. In fact, soundscape ecology is founded on the idea that people can alter acoustic conditions to provide particular sounds that appear to have been lost the opportunity to recover.

People attempt to recover, or protect, a particular sound or soundscape when they believe it has value. Pijanowski et al., the authors of "Soundscape Ecology: The Science of Sound in the Landscape," observe that "natural and unique soundscapes," as well as specific sounds within them, "have many associated human ideals, such as cultural, sense of place, recreational, therapeutic, educational, research, artistic, and aesthetic value" (205).[10] Because "human ideals" vary across cultures and within a single culture, people frequently disagree about whether or not to value, recover, or protect a particular sound (205). Disagreements generate intra- and cross-cultural interactions through which people negotiate their relationships to place and space with others. The restoration of

wolves to various habitats in the West, implicit in my analysis of McCarthy's *The Crossing* in Chapter 2, provides a case in point. Prior to the late-nineteenth century, the howling of wolves resonated throughout forested regions in the intermountain West, wherever large game was available. For hunting cultures, wolves' howls were valuable; they alerted human hunters to the presence of deer, elk, and moose. Howls also furnished these spaces with a wild quality, which some people celebrated and others attempted to eradicate.

When settlers arrived in the intermountain West and soon thereafter developed the ranching industry, the presence of wolves became an increasingly vexed issue. Wolves killed livestock, so people killed wolves. Eventually, for all intents and purposes, the howling of wolves ceased; during the first half of the twentieth century, one of the sounds that signaled the wildness of particular places in the West was effectively eliminated. During the 1980s and 90s, wildlife conservationists developed plans to restore wolves to locations in Montana, Wyoming (Yellowstone National Park), and New Mexico. In 1995, the Yellowstone Wolf Project released a pack of wolves in the park, and howls once again resounded in the West. Because howls carry up to six miles and wolves are notoriously evasive, people are more likely to encounter wolves by sound than by sight. Thus, in current debates about the restoration of wolves, people often invoke the wolf's howl to trigger various responses to the animal's presence in the landscape.[11] People's responses to howling vary according to their cultural identification. A family that has for generations made its living as ranchers is, of course, more likely to perceive howling wolves as threats than to valorize wolf vocalizations because of their association with wildness. In this example, a particular sound instigates interactions between cultures and

underscores the variability of relationships to space and place in a region where personal, cultural, economic, and aesthetic value systems widely differ.

This variability implies that no two people are likely to experience a place or be affected by a sound in exactly the same way. While there is nothing particularly novel in this idea, I would argue that it is overtly political in the context of globalization's ongoing production of space—a process that, though human beings are responsible for, many of us perceive and experience as beyond our control. On a deeply personal level, places are meaningful to people; people make them meaningful. Places texture our lives as we move into, out of, across, and through them. They ground us when we leave them and return to them, reminding us all along where our desires were born, where they burned out. The sounds of places, in our memories of and our direct encounters with them, vibrate through our ears, stilling us and making us move. Many of these sounds, I sense, motivate us to take action, to listen more carefully, and to recognize that we produce place as much as we are produced by it.

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[1] The distance howls travel depends on the environment, but Lopez notes that, in "the still arctic air," howls "may carry six miles or more" (38).

[2] Comer attributes the term "everyday regionalisms" to Matt Herman, who uses the term in his essay "Literature, Growth, and Criticism."

[3] Limón is critiquing the "globalizing readings" of José Saldívar in *The Dialectics of Our America: Genealogy, Cultural Critique, and Literary History* (163). Limón agrees with Jeff Karem that Saldívar's "postcolonial globalization" of Latin American texts shows "inattention to region in its socio-cultural fullness" (163-64).

[4] Campanarian, Corbin notes, is an "epithet" that was "once a part of ordinary speech" but has virtually disappeared (xix). It refers to "bells and bell founding" (xix).

[5] In *Mechanical Sound: Technology, Culture, and Public Problems of Noise in the Twentieth Century*, Karin Bijsterveld observes, "the rise of new machines and the process of stacking various forms of noise legislation on one another over time created a paradox of control. Experts and politicians increasingly promised to control noise by measuring and maximizing sound levels" (3).

[6] See National Park Service. U.S. Department of the Interior. Zion National Park. Soundscape Management Plan. Springdale, UT: National Park Service, 2010. The whole document is available online.

[7] For an overview of Kahn's perspective on the impact of phonography on "the changing conceptions of aurality" (2), see the introduction to *Noise Water Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (8-13).

[8] Kim Tingley provides a concise account of soundscape ecology in "Whisper of the Wild," published in 2012, where he notes that "only in the past five years or so" have scientists "been able to reliably record months-long stretches of audio in the wildernesses of Earth" (44). Scientists have been recording natural soundscapes for more than a decade, but the field of soundscape ecology is less than five years old.

[9] Interestingly enough, just before Tingley reaches this conclusion, he quotes Bryan Pijanowski, one of the lead authors in the Denali study, who explains that soundscapes are "an acoustic reflection of the patterns and processes of the landscape" (44). Patterns and processes imply dynamism, change that is not necessarily irrevocable.

[10] See Pijanowski et al. "Soundscape Ecology: the Science of Sound in the Landscape," published in *Bioscience* 61.3 (2011): 203-216.

[11] A 1994 headline from *The Independent*, a London-based newspaper, reads "Howl of the Grey Wolf Returns to Haunt the Rockies." A 1995 headline from the *Los Angeles Times* reads, "What Price the Howl of the Wolf." This second article begins by noting, "After nearly a century of silence, visitors to Yellowstone National Park may hear wolves howl as early as this summer" (1). These are but two examples among hundreds in which journalists use the howl to signal the contentious debates over wolf reintroduction programs in the American West.

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